RP to deport 2 American brothers linked to al-Qaida

Story Below, Col. 3

Hope springs eternal for Filipinos, poll shows

HOPE is one thing Filipinos still have in abundance.

Ninety percent of Filipinos said last month they would enter the New Year with hope, rather than fear, according to the Social Weather Stations.

This figure is slightly lower than the 95 percent who expressed hope in the fourth quarter of 2002 for the coming year 2003.

HOPE/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

PNP warns policemen: Fire and you'll be fired

By Christian V. Esguerra, Nelson F. Flores and Margaux.C. Ortiz

THE ONLY good bang comes from hitting those pots and pans and not from deadly firecrackers.

The Philippine National Police yesterday appealed to the public not to let firecrackers, fires and stray bullets get in the way of a safe New Year celebration.

PNP/ A4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Wednesday, December 31, 2003 ★★ 46 pages / 5 sections / vol. 19 / no. 23 P15 website: www.inq7.net

GMA offers aid to purge victims

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has offered help to families of the victims of the anti-infiltration campaigns of the Communist Party of the Philippine in their search for the remains of their loved ones.

"We are prepared to use the forensic facilities and expertise of the government to search for and identify victims and the circumstances of their death. For instance, we already have facilities for DNA matching," the President said after the INQUIRER came up with a five-part special report on the purges.

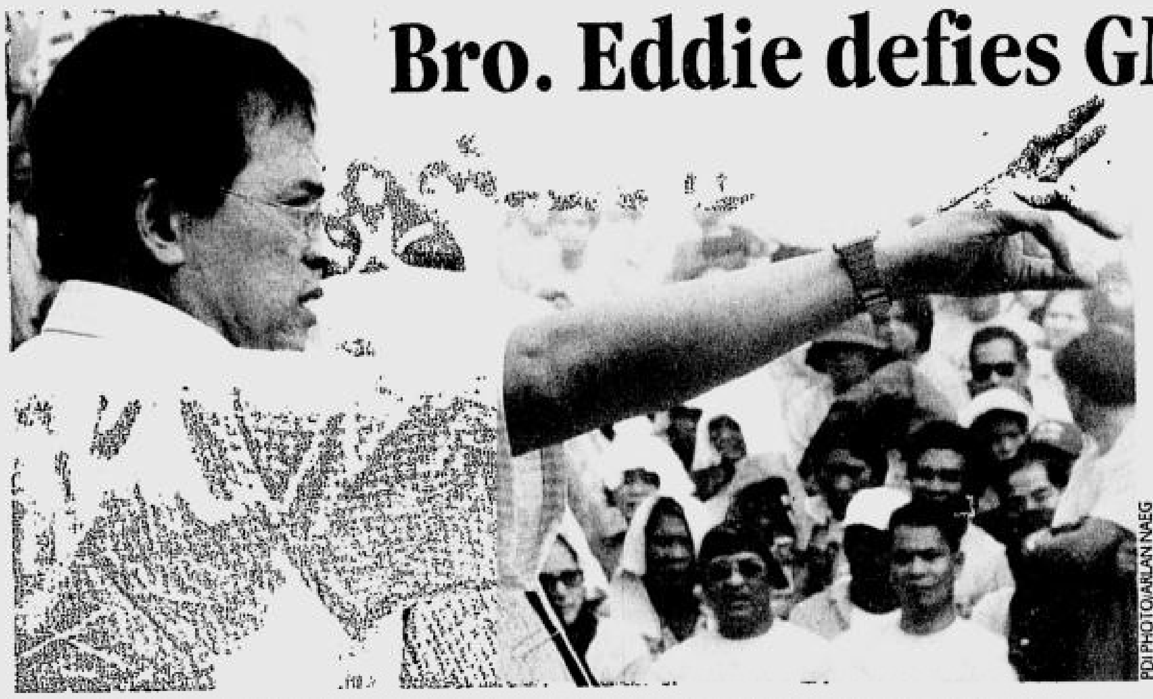
"I am prepared to discuss these matters with the families and to do all I can to give them justice," Ms Macapagal said in a statement sent to the INQUIRER.

Hundred of members and supporters of the CPP died in a series of anti-infiltration campaigns against suspected government spies that the party conducted between 1982 and 1989. Many of them were buried in unmarked graves and have yet to be found.

Scores survived the purges such as "Operation Missing Link"

GMA OFFERS/ A8

Bro. Eddie defies GMA, files candidacy



PDI PHOTO/ARLAN NAEG

EVANGELIST Bro. Eddie Villanueva gestures during a spiritual cum political rally at the Bulacan State University in Malolos, Bulacan, on Tuesday. He later filed his certificate of candidacy for president.

By Tonette Orejas
and Carmela Reyes
PDI Central Luzon Desk
Blanche S. Rivera
and Martin P. Marfil

HE CALLED it a "prophetic gesture to redeem the Philippines." Others are bound to see it as defiance of Malacañang.

Evangelist Eduardo "Bro. Eddie" Villanueva filed his certificate of candidacy for the highest position in the land yesterday, defending his right as a religious leader to get involved in politics "at this time when drug lords, gambling lords, smuggling lords and movie actors are running for the presidency."

There is no turning back, he said, dashing the hopes of both administration and opposition parties which allegedly "sent feelers" asking him to drop his bid and join their groups.

Villanueva, who listed his profession as "educator, economist and evangelist," claimed he turned down offers to be the other contenders' running mate. He did not say who made the offers, but added that "concessions" were also presented to him.

Only the other night, he said, President Macapagal-Arroyo's "common friends" had asked him to be her running mate. He could not say if this was before or after Sen. Noli de Castro announced he was accepting the same offer.

A novice in politics, Villanueva said all he wished from the ruling

BRO. EDDIE/ A8

Roco taps an Aquino for his running mate

Palace hails De Castro for 'big sacrifice'

MALACAÑANG was yesterday profuse in praising Sen. Noli de Castro for his "big sacrifice" in deciding to become President Macapagal-Arroyo's running mate in the 2004 elections.

"[He] is making a big sacrifice in accepting the vice presidential draft. Noli's entry into the team enriches it tremendously in terms of professional competence and political weight," Ms Macapagal said in a statement.

Her spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the sacrifice she was referring to was De Castro's decision to abandon his presidential ambitions despite being a consistent topnotcher in public surveys.

However, Bunye said, this did not mean that the President was afraid of facing De Castro at the polls. The decision was "mutually accepted," he said.

The "sacrifice" of De Castro, a former news anchor of ABS-CBN who is widely known as "Kabayan," has triggered speculation that he was given a substantial amount of money—between

PALACE HAILS/ A8

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

PRESIDENTIAL candidate Raul Roco and his followers sing the national anthem at the monument to national hero, Jose Rizal. After laying a wreath, Roco and his party walked a kilometer to the Commission on Elections in Intramuros to file his certificate of candidacy for president.

VP bet, backers, analysts surprised

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

PRESIDENTIAL candidate Raul Roco yesterday pulled a surprise on everyone with his choice of a running mate.

But no one was more surprised than the chosen candidate.

At the last minute, Roco picked ex-Tarlac Rep. Herminio "Hermie' Aquino to be his running mate under the Alyansa ng Pagasa. Aquino, 54, is an uncle of the late Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino.

He only agreed to Roco's proposal yesterday morning, minutes before he and Roco were to file their certificates of candidacy (COC).

While well-known in Tarlac, Aquino is not a national political figure like the other members of the Aquino clan.

Learning of Roco's choice, Senate President Franklin Drilon, who is in Shanghai, surmised that it was possible that the Roco camp was still on the look-out for a vice presidential candidate.

"They might still be looking for a viable vice presidential candidate," Drilon said.

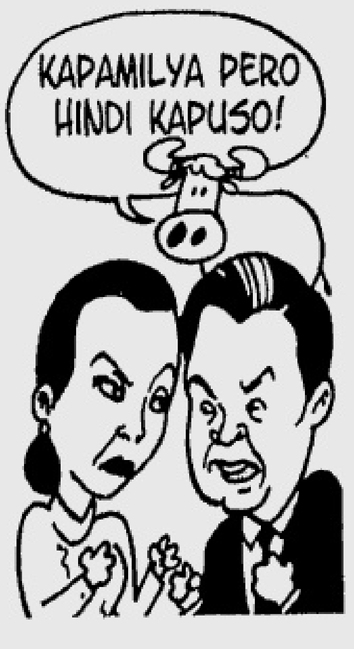
Roco announced his choice after laying a wreath at the monument to Jose Rizal at the Luneta. He and his senatorial slate later marched to the Commission on Elections with hundreds of supporters.

The Alyansa ng Pagasa senatorial candidates who filed their COCs yesterday were former Solicitor General Frank Chavez, lawyer Mel "Batas" Mauricio, former National Food Authority chief Edno Joson, blind lawyer Nicanor Gatmaytan Jr. and bowling champion Bong Coo.

Reelectionist Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said he would file his certificate on Jan. 3 after taking the mandatory drug test. TV host Jay Sonza said he would file his on

ROCO/ A8

It's ABS-CBN vs ABS-CBN in vice presidential race



KAPAMILYA PERO HINDI KAPUSO!

By Carlito Pablo
and Christine O. Avendaño

THE BETS are on for ABS-CBN vs ABS-CBN.

And Sen. Noli de Castro, a front-runner in the 2004 race for the vice presidency who has agreed to be President Macapagal-Arroyo's running mate, is not lacking in barkers.

Rep. Wilfrido Villarama (Lakas, Bulacan), for one, is convinced that De Castro will clobber Sen. Loren Legarda, his fellow ex-newsreader in the media network and believed most likely running mate of actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Villarama yesterday said all surveys indicated that De Castro was dominating the field.

IT'S ABS-CBN/ A8

2 US brods linked to al-Qaida

By Alcuin Papa

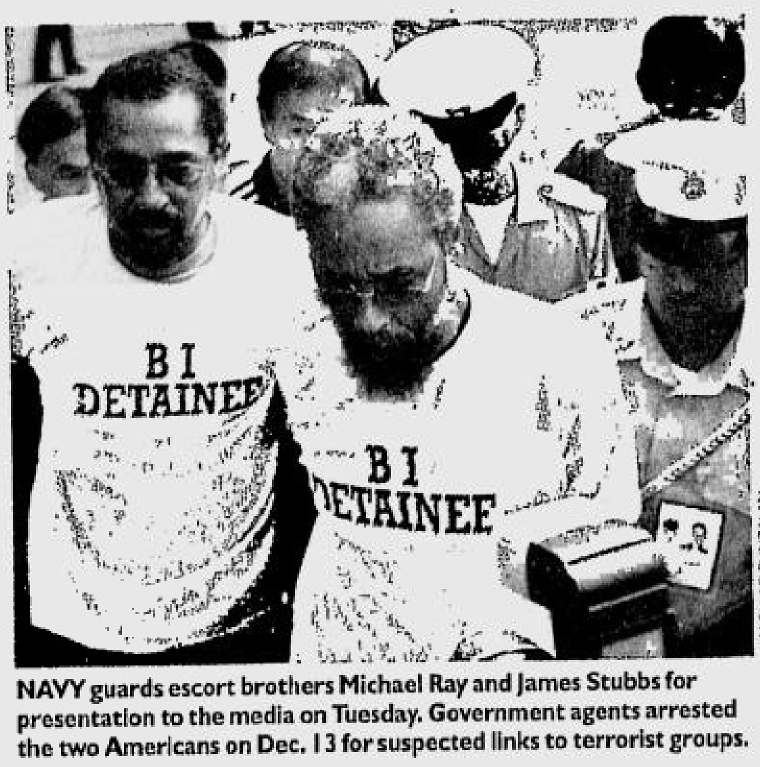
IMMIGRATION officials yesterday said they would deport two American brothers who had been arrested for suspected links to local terrorists and for allegedly meeting with charity groups believed to be al-Qaida fronts in the country.

Officers of the Bureau of Immigration and intelligence agents of the Philippine Navy and Philippine Marine Corps arrested Michael Ray Stubbs, 55, and his brother James, 56, a convert to Islam, for alleged violation of immigration laws on Dec. 13 in Tanza, Cavite.

The brothers denied any wrongdoing when they appeared at a news conference in handcuffs and yellow T-shirts at Navy headquarters in Manila.

The news conference was

2 US BRODS/ A4



JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

NAVY guards escort brothers Michael Ray and James Stubbs for presentation to the media on Tuesday. Government agents arrested the two Americans on Dec. 13 for suspected links to terrorist groups.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Bicol Region, Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms mostly over eastern sections. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rains.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/31/03

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONTPAGE

Erap: I was forced to sign

Deposed leader says he accepted Sandigan authority 'under duress'

By Armand N. Nocum

JAILED ex-President Joseph Estrada yesterday claimed he was "under duress" when he gave a "personal undertaking" that he was submitting himself to the jurisdiction of the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court trying him with plunder and graft charges.

"I was forced, compelled to abide by the wishes of the court due to [the] worsening situation," he said, citing the arthritis and multi-slipped disc problems which could result in his being paralyzed from the waist down.

"I believe I'm still [the] President," he said in a telephone interview from detention in Camp Capinpin, Tanay, Rizal.

Estrada, who continues to insist that he is still the President despite being toppled by a people power uprising in 2001 and put on trial for corruption, last year dismissed his lawyers and declared he did not recognize the Sandiganbayan court hearing the case against him.

The anti-graft court last week allowed Estrada to leave for the United States for a knee replacement operation, but on condition that he put down in writing that he was "recognizing the authority of the court over his person and over the cases filed against him."

The other conditions set by the court were: that Estrada promises to return to the country; that he will not go to other places outside the US; that he foots the bill for the four policemen assigned to guard him; and that he leaves within 10 days after receiving the resolution and returns to the Philippines by March 31.

Last Monday, Estrada finally submitted the undertaking but used the word "submit" instead of "recognize."

One of Estrada's court-appointed lawyers, Noel Malaya, explained that this was because Estrada believes that he is still the President of the country.

Play with words

But Jose Flaminiano, another Estrada lawyer who is a retired prosecutor, dismissed the play with words as having of little value to the court. He said the words "submit" and "recognize" were the same.

"His claims to the presidency is his personal view, which may not be the view of other people," he said.

Another one of Estrada's lawyers, former Sandiganbayan presiding justice Manuel Pamaran, said discussions on whether Estrada recognizes the authority of the court was immaterial because the court has effective control over him while he is in detention.

Yesterday, defense lawyers filed an omnibus motion asking for an extension of the 10-day period given to Estrada to prepare for his three-month travel to the United States. They asked that the ousted leader be allowed to stay in the country until Jan. 23 since his operation is scheduled for Feb. 4 to 6.

The court's 10-day preparation period would have ended on Jan. 3.

The Estrada lawyers also asked that the four-man security contingent assigned to escort Estrada be reduced to two as they claimed there was no way he would be able to flee. They also asked that Estrada be allowed to choose his police escorts.

"There is no pressing need for [four] police escorts because the operation would render him immobile," said Pamaran, adding that the government can always ask the US government and the Philippine Embassy for assistance in guarding Estrada.

Conditions sought

Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said the state had no objection to the changes in the conditions being sought by the defense. He said the issue was irrelevant as the prosecution has filed a motion for reconsideration for the court to "reverse" its Dec. 23 resolution allowing Estrada's US travel.

But Malaya said he did not believe the court would grant the motion.

"The special division rarely reverses its ruling. Estrada is certainly going to leave the country," he said.

He said Estrada would fly back home after his scheduled surgery so there was no need to ask for an extension of the March 31 deadline to return.

But Flaminiano said it was possible Estrada would be staying longer in the US beyond the March 31 deadline set by the court for his return as there might be complications from the operation.

This prompted Villa-Ignacio to say that it would be better for Estrada to have his surgery done in the country as local doctors are known to have a 90 percent success rate in such operations.

Villa-Ignacio said Flaminiano's admission may bolster talk that Estrada may choose to wait out the results of the May presidential elections in the US, and may decide not to return should the opposition lose.

RIZAL DAY RITES
President Macapagal and other officials crane their necks during yesterday's flag-raising ceremony marking the 107th anniversary of the martyrdom of Jose Rizal. The officials are (from left) Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, National Historical Institute chairman Ambeth Ocampo, Trade Undersecretary Evelyn Pantig, Armed Forces chief Gen. Narciso Abaya, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and NHI executive director Ludovico Badoy.
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Kidnap leader nabbed in US

By Christian V. Esguerra

ONE OF the most notorious kidnappers in the police's order of battle has been arrested in the United States, the INQUIRER learned yesterday.

Dr. Eddie Trinidad, who had an P850,000 price tag on his head, was arrested by US authorities sometime last month, according to a highly placed source in the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) team.

The source, who spoke to the INQUIRER on condition of anonymity, said Trinidad was being held at an undisclosed location in the US, waiting to be picked up by a team from the Philippines' National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf) in a few days.

"He's already in the bag," said the source, a senior Pacer official. "He'll be brought back to the Philippines soon."

Trinidad, sixth on Naktf's list of the country's 10 most wanted kidnappers, is a key member of the notorious Fajardo kidnap-for-ransom syndicate. His last known address was on Sta. Isabel St., Cupang, Antipolo City.

His arrest reduced to five the number of kidnappers on the Naktf's priority list. The task force earlier killed Dr. Roberto Obeles Yap in a shoot-out in Dinalupihan, Bataan, then arrested Vilmor Catamco, Allan Niegas and Jose Lim Arnuco in a string of operations early this month.

Rolando and Harold Fajardo, the two kidnap gang leaders now on top of the government list, are in Italy where they fled about six months ago, according to the Pacer official.

"We're having difficulty getting them back because we have no extradition treaty with Italy," he said.

Even if the Fajardos were hiding in Europe, the source said, the group's "sub-leaders" were still actively directing the gang's operations, particularly in Metro Manila.

Each of the Fajardos, he said, had a P1-million price tag on his head because the group was also involved in robbery.

Besides the Fajardo gang, he said, authorities were also working to bust the Waray syndicate, whose splinter groups were said to be behind three recent abductions committed in exactly 16 days.

The group was allegedly behind the kidnapping and murder of Coca Cola executive Betti Chua Sy on Nov. 17; the abduction of a 10-year-old Chinese-Filipino girl in Paco, Manila four days later, and that of a two-year-old boy in Muntinlupa City on Dec. 2, according to the Pacer official.

The original gang, he said, included former military officers and other natives of Iloilo and Samar. A series of police operations soon hammered the organization, prompting it to split into several sub-groups composed of recruits from the two provinces, he added.

The Allan Niegas gang, whose leader was arrested in Leyte on Dec. 4, was said to be a splinter group of the Waray.

Angie won't run; Obet will

FORMER Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes has given up plans of running for the Senate in May after the Chinese-Filipino community prevailed on him to stay on as head of the anti-kidnapping campaign in order to sustain the momentum of its initial success.

Reyes, who gave early signs of wanting to run, made the announcement at a briefing in Malacañang yesterday, to cheers from the Chinese-Filipino community and the members of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force.

"I wish to announce that I am not running for any position in 2004. I'd rather spend my time doing work rather than campaigning and try to make a difference," said Reyes who added that he had been invited to join the ruling party slate.

"I don't think it's the correct thing for me to do now. I got advice from my family, relatives, friends and also the Chinese-Filipino community," he said.

Since Reyes took over as anti-kidnapping czar, the government has reported a dramatic decrease in the number of crimes and success in capturing suspected criminals.

"His appointment has been vindicated and we're happy that he is not going to run," said anti-crime lobbyist Teresita Ang-See who chairs the Citizens Against Crime and Corruption.

In a related development, Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto "Obet" Pagdanganan has resigned from the Cabinet to seek a Senate seat in May. He filed his certificate of candidacy with the Commission on Elections after giving his notice to the President.

Pagdanganan, a former three-term governor of Bulacan and two-time losing senatorial candidate, is on the the ruling Lakas-CMD slate.

Meanwhile, another resignation to pursue electoral plans has placed another woman in the Cabinet.

Malacañang announced yesterday the appointment of Justice Undersecretary Merceditas Gutierrez as officer in charge of the Department of Justice after Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong resigned to run for Congress.

Gutierrez is the third female career official appointed to head a major department in recent months. She will be the country's first female justice secretary if her appointment becomes permanent. *Gil C. Cabacungan and Philip C. Tubeza*

Ping's run won't hurt FPJ, says LDP bloc

By Martin P. Marfil

SENATOR Panfilo Lacson's departure from the party would not seriously affect the candidacy of actor Fernando Poe Jr, the Angara faction of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino said yesterday.

Former Congressman Miguel Romero said Lacson was being supported by only six congressmen, and that two of these supporters had since left the party.

Asked if the LDP was then prepared to carry on without Lacson and his supporters, Romero, a member of the party's national executive committee, said: "Anything can happen. I am hopeful that we can still forge unity. If this does not materialize, it will not affect the candidacy of Mr. Poe in any way."

He explained that 36 out of the 40 committee members had ratified the actions of Sen. Edgardo Angara, party chair, backing the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, which has put up the movie actor as presidential bet.

Romero gave this opinion after the hearing at the Commission on Elections which was meant to determine who was authorized to nominate LDP candidates. The issue is being contested by the Angara faction and the group of LDP secretary general Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino, which supports Lacson.

Angara insists the LDP constitution grants him sole authority to nominate candidates. Lacson's camp says tradition gives said authority to the secretary general.

The infighting has resulted in Aquino being placed on "forced leave." Aquino retaliated by "suspending" Angara.

Angara's camp stressed that Aquino was thus on leave when he certified the nomination of Lacson, who filed his candidacy on Monday as LDP candidate.

Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos asked if the two factions were amenable to having the executive vice chair nominate the candidates, as the party charter prescribed in case of the chair's incapacity.

Getting colder and colder

WHILE the holiday season starts to wind up after the New Year's Eve revelry, the country is just about to experience the cold picking up this January, the weather bureau said yesterday.

"Winter in the northern hemisphere, where the Philippines is, starts in December and ends in mid-February. The peak of the cold happens in January," said Pagasa weather forecasting chief Dr. Prisco Nilo.

"While the country doesn't have winter, we experience the cold because of the air coming from northern Asia. We have yet to experience the coldest temperature this time because it would be in January, when the cold peaks," Nilo said.

Yesterday, the temperature range was 21 to 29 degrees Celsius in Metro Manila and 11 to 21 degrees Celsius in Baguio.

Groups plan last-ditch move to stop Meralco hike

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

VARIOUS groups opposing the power rate hike sought by the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) will meet today to plot their options, which include seeking the President's intervention or obtaining a temporary restraining order from the Supreme Court, to stop the imminent hike in electricity rates next month.

Federation of Philippine Industries president Jesus Arranza told the INQUIRER that business, consumer and labor groups would only succeed if they make "a concerted effort" to block the provisional authority granted by the Energy Regulatory Commission to Meralco to raise its rates by 12 centavos per kilowatt hour starting January.

Outgoing ERC chair Manuel R. Sanchez said Monday that it would not reverse its decision granting the rate hike that would be reflected in next month's electricity bills.

"We still have time to block the power rate hike because the bills would only be due toward the end of next month," Arranza said. The public hearings are scheduled to start Jan. 5.

Since his group has not filed any appeal with the ERC, Arranza said the FPI and other business groups might take the lead in filing the case with the Supreme Court.

The groups oppose the power rate hike because no public hearing was conducted and that its proceeds would be used to expand Meralco's facilities which Arranza said should be borne by the company and not its shareholders.

Arranza said that business groups might also ask President Macapagal-Arroyo to intervene and stop the ERC from proceeding with the rate hike.

"We believe that there is no urgency in the power rate hike and that it should be deferred until public hearings are held. We think the President will agree with us that public hearings are necessary to ensure transparency," Arranza said.

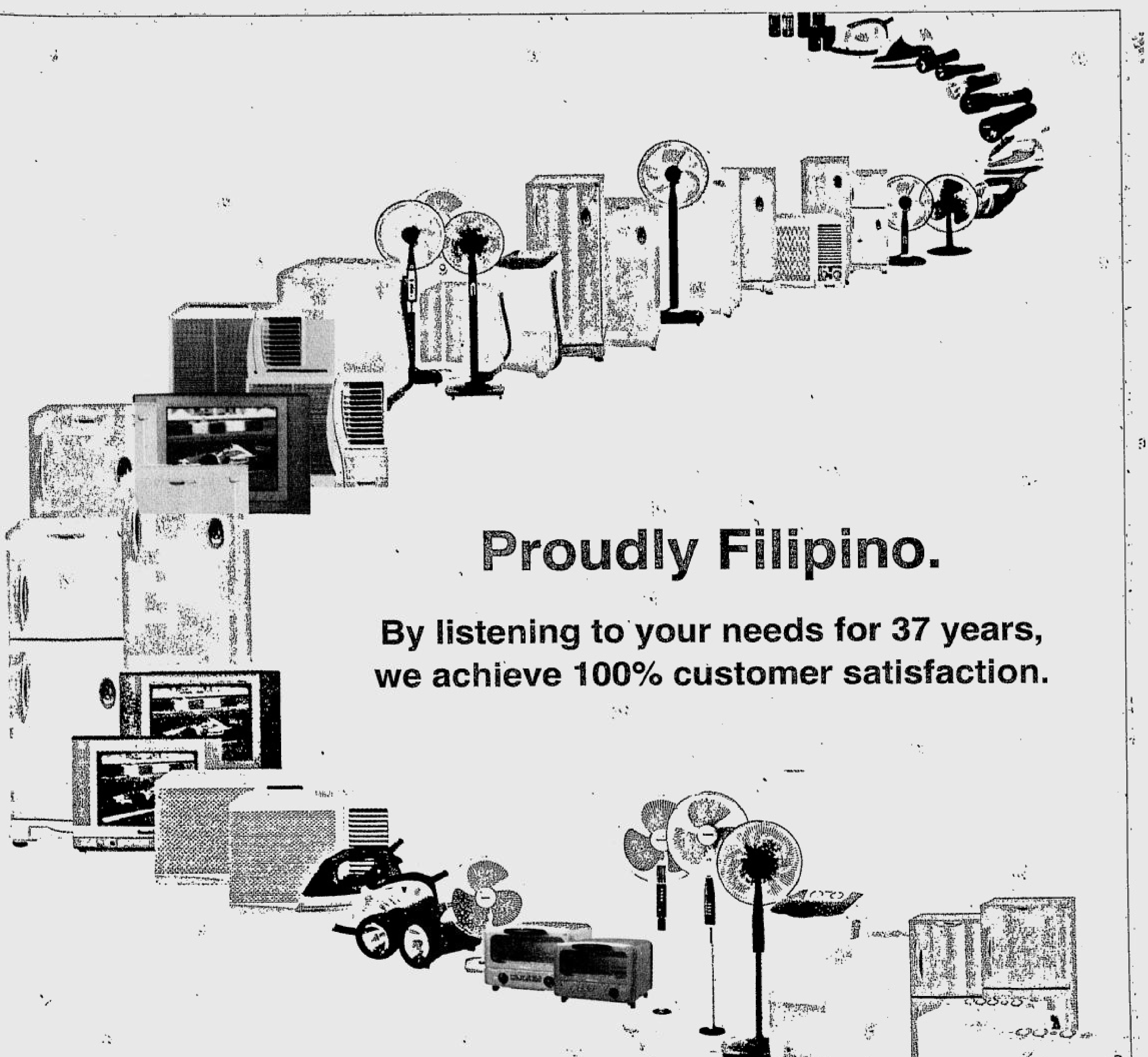
The Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) and several party-list congressmen have appealed anew to the High Court to stop Meralco and the ERC from implementing the rate hike.

In a one-page urgent motion, they asked the tribunal to immediately issue a status quo order or a TRO against the planned increase.

The FDC and several party-list congressmen filed a petition on Dec. 23 before the Supreme Court to stop the rate hike.

Besides FDC President Ana Maria Nemenzo, the other petitioners were Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales, Partido Manggagawa Rep. Renato Magtubo, Sanlakas Rep. JV Bautista, and Ma. Theresa Diokno-Pascual.

The petitioners also asked the Court to nullify the provisional authority the ERC gave to Meralco on Nov. 27. *With a report from Philip C. Tubeza*



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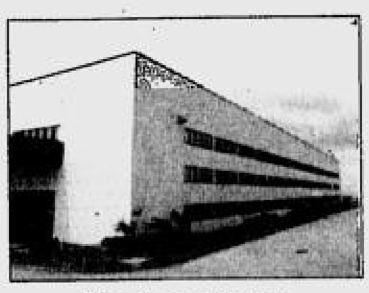

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Is it with hope or with fear that you enter the coming year?* Philippines, November 8-24

	RP	NCR	BAL. LUZ	VIZ	MIN	ABC	D	E
With hope	90%	85%	89%	91%	92%	92%	88%	91%
With fear	90%	85%	89%	91%	92%	92%	88%	91%

*Q 158. Ang darating na taon ba ay inyong sasalubungin na may pag-asa o pangamba? [Sasalubungin ang taon na may pag-asa; Sasalubungin ang taon na may pangamba]

Hope springs eternal ...

From page A1

SWS said Filipinos were more hopeful of the coming year than Germans. In Germany, where the survey question originated, those expressing hope ranged from 56 percent in 1991 to 31 percent in 2002.

SWS started asking the question in the country in 2000. That year, 87 percent of Filipinos expressed hope about the coming year. The figure slightly increased to 88 percent in 2001.

Results of the nationwide survey that SWS conducted on Nov. 8-24 showed that hopefulness about the coming year was widespread in all areas and across all classes.

SWS found that respondents belonging to the socioeconomic group ABC were the most optimistic among Filipinos. Ninety-two percent of them said they would enter the New Year with hope. Just 8 percent said they would enter the coming year with fear.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents from the socioeconomic D group said they would enter the New Year with hope. It was 91 percent for Group E.

The survey covered 1,200 respondents and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

Hope prevailed even among the few who saw a sad Christmas, according to SWS.

Among the minority (33 percent) who were expecting this year's Christmas to be sad, as many as 80 percent saw 2004 with hope.

SWS said the survey question was patterned after polls conducted annually by the Allensbach Institute of Demoskopy, an opinion research center in Germany.

PNP warns policemen ...

From page A1

And to ensure that revelers won't forget, Senior Supt. Arturo Cacdac, PNP Firearms and Explosives Division chief, said police units would be deployed throughout the major towns and cities to discourage the use of prohibited firecrackers and the indiscriminate firing of guns.

"Higher police headquarters has issued instructions for officers to roam cities and municipalities to ensure that chaos would not reign in the streets, especially shortly before midnight," Cacdac told reporters yesterday.

He said the teams would also be on the lookout for vendors storing more than 25 kilos of firecrackers in one place and those stocking more than 1,000 kilos of pyrotechnics among a "cluster" of dealers.

He said vendors were prohibited from keeping too many firecrackers in one location because of the danger of inadvertent explosions.

But when asked how the police would determine if a vendor had exceeded the official storage limit, Cacdac replied: "That's the handicap."

Aside from dealers, the official said authorities would also be on the lookout for revelers setting off firecrackers weighing more than two grams.

The limit, he said, means the public would have to settle for making merry with "three-stars, judas belts, whistles" and other relatively "weak" pyrotechnics.

"Lolo thunder, super lolo, *pla-pla*, atomic bomb, OG" and similar powerful firecrackers are strictly prohibited, the official said.

Cacdac also strongly urged the public to report immediately anyone who indiscriminately fires a gun, whether policeman, soldier or civilian.

"There are many ways to welcome the new year and firing guns is definitely not one of them," he said.

As early as last week, field commanders had begun taping shut the muzzles of their men's guns to keep these from being fired.

After the new year, the commanders themselves will remove the tape from the guns to determine which had been fired.

Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. yesterday ordered the filing of administrative and criminal charges against police, fire and jail personnel who indiscriminately fire their service firearms during the New Year revelry.

In a memorandum to the PNP, the Bureau of Fire Protection and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, Lina said the indiscriminate firing of guns by their personnel is punishable under Article 155 of the Revised Penal Code.

"Any policeman, fireman or jailer found to have indiscriminately fired his gun shall be criminally prosecuted under the Revised Penal Code, as well as administratively charged for violation of National Police Commission Memorandum Circular 93-024," Lina, who is also National Police Commission chair, said.

For his part, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando urged the public to avoid fires and other accidents "by using firecrackers and pyrotechnic devices responsibly."

He said the use of firecrackers and pyrotechnic devices should also be "appreciated by the whole neighborhood."

"*Iwasan ang pag-aaway sa mga kapitbahay dahil sa paputok* (Avoid quarreling with your neighbors over the use of firecrackers)," Fernando said at a press conference.

"*Kapag nagpapaputok, siguraduhing huwag magiging sanhi ng apoy* (Make sure your firecrackers don't cause a fire)," he said.

He urged a stop to the practice of burning rubber tires, saying the smoke pollutes the air and destroys the environment.

He also reminded the public to avoid drinking and driving during the merrymaking and to clean up themselves after the celebration.

In Manila, the city is prepared for the worst.

Dr. Florante Baltazar, Manila health department chief, said the city's hospitals were ready to handle the anticipated cases of firecracker-related injuries on New Year's eve.

"We have been coordinating ... it would be as if there is no holiday," Baltazar said.

He said the four hospitals under the MHD—the Ospital ng Maynila, Tondo General Hospital, Ospital ng Sampaloc and Gat Andres Bonifacio Medical Center—are equipped to handle any casualties as the city welcomes 2004.

Baltazar said the city's infirmaries and health centers would also be open 24 hours to treat minor injury cases.

"They have antibiotics, medicated injury washes and equipment to stitch up open wounds," he said.

Treatment at MHD-supervised hospitals and health centers is free, he added.

Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza Jr. had said that banging on pots and pans and making noise by other means were preferable to spending money on firecrackers and then losing a finger or two in the process.

He urged the public to watch the 30-minute fireworks display on Jan. 1 at 7 p.m. by the Roxas Boulevard Baywalk.

Western Police District chief Pedro Bulaong said cop patrols would be roaming the streets on Dec. 31 to monitor the New Year celebration around the city. *With reports from Tarra Quismundo, Tina Santos, Leila B. Salaverria and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

2 US brods ...

From page A1

presided over by Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo, Navy chief Vice Admiral Ernesto de Leon and Marine commandant Maj. Gen. Emmanuel Teodosio.

Domingo told reporters that James Stubbs had met with members of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group as well as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, two groups loosely linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

"These are all fabricated lies ... We are not terrorists," James Stubbs, who is also known as Jamil Daud Mujahid, shouted as Domingo addressed the news conference. "My brother is not even a Muslim, he's a Christian."

An irritated Domingo responded by saying: "This is the Philippine government. They're violating immigration laws and they're being charged and they are going through immigration proceedings."

James Stubbs kept professing his and his brother's innocence until they were whisked away from the media conference.

The brothers, who were born in the US state of Missouri, would be deported to the United States as "undesirable aliens ... based on intelligence reports that they were seen meeting with known leaders of various terrorist cells in the country with links to al-Qaida," the immigration bureau said.

Domingo said the two had been under surveillance before their arrest.

Teodosio added that his men had monitored cell phone calls by James Stubbs to Ibrahim Sali, an Abu Sayyaf bandit who is now detained at the National Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City.

"He had been in constant communication with Sali ... He even revealed to Sali that he was a classmate of Bin Laden and named a son Osama," the Marine commandant said.

Domingo said the Stubbs brothers had tourist visas but also carried documents indicating they were soliciting funds for the construction of Muslim schools and mosques.

Domingo acknowledged there was no evidence linking the two to any past or planned terrorist plots, but said James Stubbs allegedly called for the overthrow of the US government in statements to local authorities.

James Stubbs said he was in the country to visit his pregnant Filipino wife, Eloisa Olga.

US concerned

A naval intelligence officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said US government officials were concerned that Michael Ray Stubbs, who reportedly retired as an air conditioning technician at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory radiation detection center in Livermore, California, may have passed on sensitive information to his brother.

The laboratory had been contracted by the US government to do research on how to counter nuclear, biological and chemical warfare.

Susan Houghton, a spokesperson at the laboratory, confirmed that Michael Ray Stubbs worked there for about 10 years until 2000, and that the lab had been cooperating with the FBI in an inquiry into whether Stubbs may have had access to sensitive information.

"We have been working closely with the FBI on this issue since he was arrested," Houghton said, adding that Stubbs' clearance was terminated after he went on medical leave in March 2000.

The US Embassy, whose consular officials met with the Stubbs brothers on Dec. 17, refused to comment on the allegations. Embassy spokesperson Karen Kelley said she understood the brothers retained legal counsel to address the charges.

According to Philippine military intelligence reports, James Stubbs left his job as a teacher in California to study Arabic in Sudan. He met in May with several charity groups suspected of being al-Qaida fronts and founded by Mahmoud Afif Abdeljalil—believed to be a close associate of Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law.

Abdeljalil was arrested in September in Zamboanga City on charges of having an expired visa. After he was interrogated, he was ordered deported.

The charities were not immediately identified, but the immigration bureau said they were used to channel funds to al-Qaida cells in the Philippines.

High-risk personality

Domingo said James Stubbs had been classified as "a high-risk personality" and placed on the immigration bureau's watchlist of suspected terrorists since the Sept. 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center.

According to intelligence reports, James Stubbs travelled to Sudan where he studied Arabic. Later he married Olga and the couple settled in Cabanatuan City for a time before relocating to Tanza.

Domingo said James Stubbs maintained several local and foreign bank accounts allegedly containing "substantial deposits from contacts of suspicious and dubious background."

The arrest of the Stubbs brothers followed a government warning earlier this month that Indonesian members of the Southeast Asian terror group Jemaah Islamiyah have been training Filipino rebels in bomb-making and other terror tactics in Mindanao.

Jemaah Islamiyah, which has links to al-Qaida, is suspected of several terror attacks, including last year's Bali bombings that killed 202 people. *With report by AP*

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RP ready to assume seat at UN Security Council

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINE mission to the United Nations yesterday expressed readiness to assume its duties when the country officially becomes one of the 10 non-permanent members of the UN Security Council starting tomorrow.

"We approach our membership with confidence and optimism," Ambassador Lauro L. Baja Jr., the country's permanent representative to the UN, said. "Most important, the President has promised full support to the delegation."

Baja said members of the Philippine delegation to the Council are prepared for the added responsibilities that come with being a member of the most important decision-making organ of the world body.

Now that the Philippines has been placed in "an elevated status" in the UN and in the international community, the country's delegation "is ready to pursue with greater vigor and determination Philippine foreign policy objectives and project Philippine values in the Security Council," Baja added.

"We will seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a difference in the Council and to promote the Filipino as a global citizen," he said.

The Security Council is considered the most important policy-making body in the UN because it is the only organ whose decisions are enforceable and binding among UN member countries.

The Philippines, along with Algeria, Benin, Brazil and Romania, was formally elected as a non-permanent member of the Council by the UN General Assembly in October. The five countries will occupy for two years the seats to be vacated by the outgoing non-permanent members—Bulgaria, Cameroon, Guinea, Mexico and Syria.

The UN Security Council has five permanent members—United States, China, Russia, France and the United Kingdom, which are collectively known as the "P-5."

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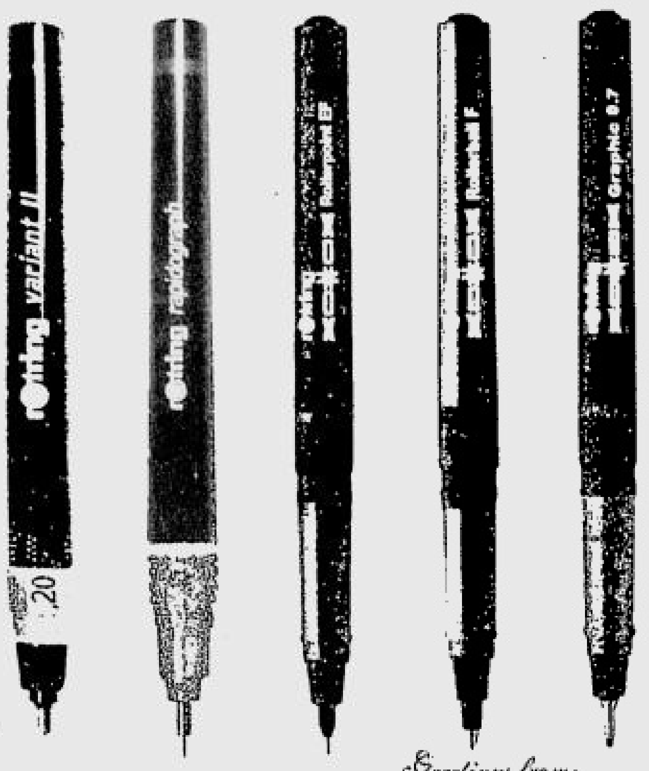
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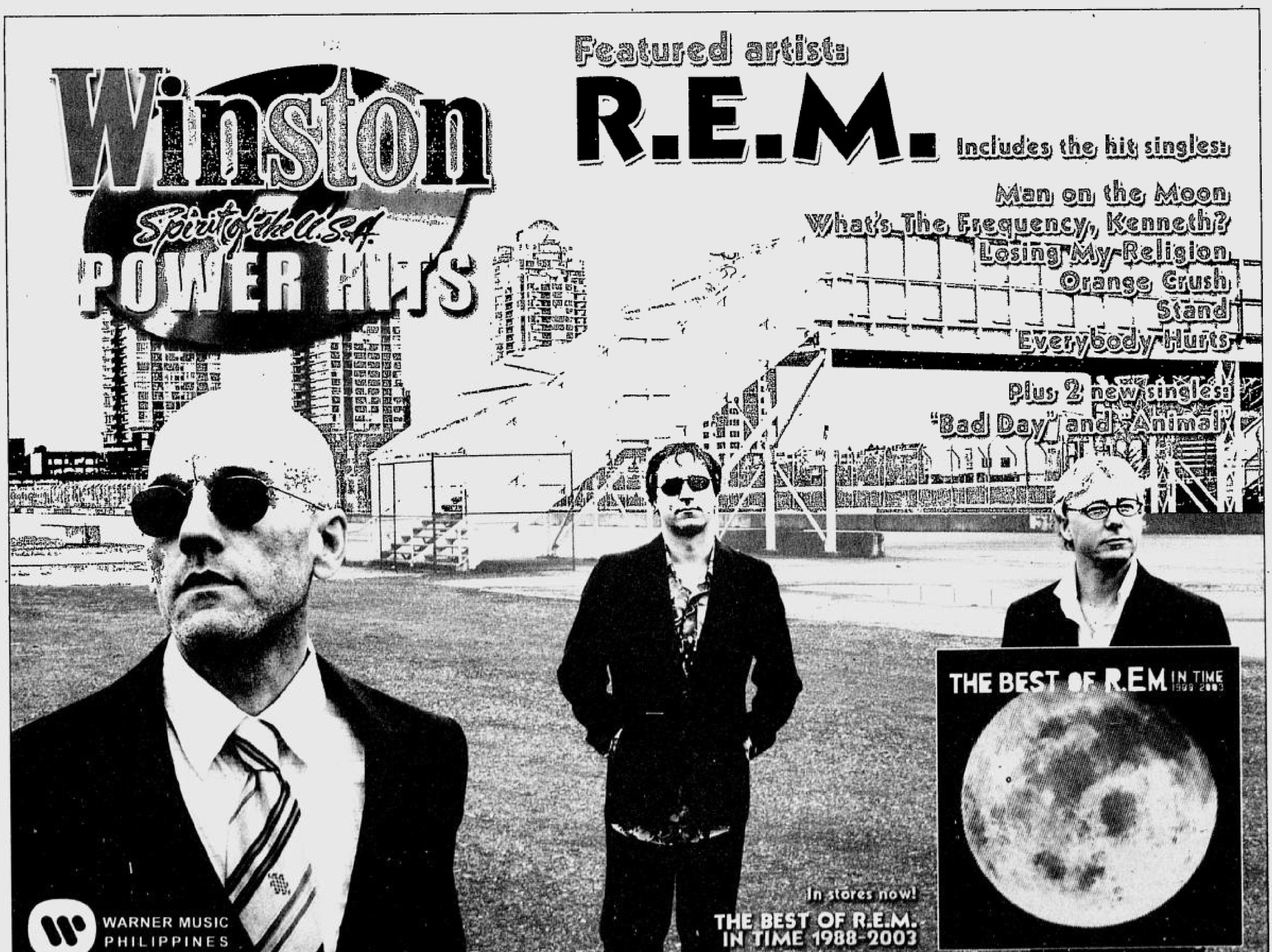
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DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER No. 08
Series of 2003

SUBJECT: **2003 GUIDELINES ON THE ACQUISITION AND DISTRIBUTION OF COMPENSABLE AGRICULTURAL LANDS UNDER VOLUNTARY LAND TRANSFER/DIRECT PAYMENT SCHEME (VLT/DPS)**

Pursuant to Section 20 of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 6657, otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988", landowners (LOs) of agricultural lands subject of acquisition under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) may enter into a voluntary arrangement for the direct transfer of their lands to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs). Section 21 of the same Act provides that direct payment may be made in cash or in kind by the ARB to the LO under the terms to be mutually agreed upon by both parties and which will be binding upon registration with and approval by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Section 44 of R.A. No. 6657, as amended by R.A. No. 7905, otherwise known as "An Act to Strengthen the Implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and for Other Purposes", provides that the Provincial Agrarian Reform Coordinating Committee (PARCCOM) shall recommend to the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) the adoption of a direct payment scheme between the landowner and the farmer or farmworker.

In the meeting of the PARC Executive Committee on 19 April 1995, the following resolution was passed:

"Resolved, that the revised rules and procedures governing the acquisition of private agricultural lands subject of voluntary land transfer or direct payment scheme (VLT/DPS) pursuant to R.A. No. 6657 be approved."

These rules and regulations are hereby issued pursuant to the mandate of R.A. No. 6657, as amended by R.A. No. 7905, and the PARC Executive Committee Resolution No. 95-57-2, dated 19 April 1995, in order to provide effective means of implementing and monitoring the VLT/DPS mode of acquisition and distribution. The PARC Secretariat, through the PARCCOM shall monitor the implementation of these guidelines.

ARTICLE I
PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. ***Coverage*** - These guidelines shall cover private agricultural lands subject of acquisition through VLT/DPS.

SEC. 2. ***Statement of Policies*** - The implementation and monitoring of the VLT/DPS shall be governed by the following policies:

a) The ARBs under the VLT/DPS are determined by the DAR to be the same individuals who would be eligible to purchase the lands in case the government, through Compulsory Acquisition (CA) or Voluntary Offer to Sell (VOS), acquired the land for distribution under the agrarian reform program.

A child of the LO may only enter into a VLT/DPS agreement with his/her parent-landowner provided he/she is a tenant in his/her own right prior to 15 June 1988. On the other hand, the child of the LO who qualifies as a beneficiary of the CARP pursuant to Section 6 of R.A. No: 6657 shall be awarded the land of his/her parents in accordance with Memorandum Circular (M.C.) No. 04, Series of 1994 titled, "Clarificatory Guidelines Concerning the Award to Children Under Sections 6 and 22 of R.A. No. 6657".

b) The ARB who opts for VLT/DPS shall be afforded priority in the processing of documents for the immediate issuance of Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA). In the event that the ARBs of the same landholding do not wish to enter into a VLT/DPS, the landholding shall be processed under standard procedures pursuant to Administrative Order (A.O.) No. 02, Series of 1996 titled, "Revised Rules and Procedures Governing the Acquisition of Agricultural Lands Subject of Voluntary Offer to Sell and Compulsory Acquisition Pursuant to Republic Act No. 6657", as amended by A.O. No. 01, Series of 1998, A.O. No. 04, Series of 2000 and A.O. No. 01, Series of 2003.

c) In general, lands shall be distributed directly to individual ARBs. In case it is not economically feasible and sound to divide the land, then it shall be owned collectively by the ARBs who shall form a cooperative or association. The distribution of lands under collective ownership shall be in accordance with the guidelines on the identification, screening and selection of, and distribution to ARBs of private agricultural lands under R.A. No. 6657.

d) The terms and conditions of the VLT/DPS shall not be less favorable to the ARB than those of the government's standing offer to purchase from the LO and to sell to the beneficiary, if such offers have been made and are fully known to both parties, including the interest to be paid thereon, if any. The interest should not be more than six percent (6%) per annum pursuant to Section 26 of R.A. No. 6657. It is incumbent upon the DAR to ensure that the ARBs understand and are made fully aware of the options available to them in land distribution.

If the subject land has not yet been valued, the determination of the acceptability of the valuation of subject land under VLT/DPS shall be based on the initial valuation of previously valued claims by the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) of similar/comparable lands in the area pursuant to A.O. No. 05, Series of 1998 titled, "Revised Rules and Regulations Governing the Valuation of Lands Voluntarily Offered or Compulsorily Acquired Pursuant to Republic Act No. 6657".

e) Direct payment in cash or in kind may be made by the ARB to the LO under the terms mutually agreed upon by them and which shall be binding upon registration with and approval by the DAR, provided the terms of payment shall not be less favorable to the ARBs. DAR's approval shall be presumed unless a notice of disapproval is received by the ARB and/or the LO within thirty (30) days from the date of receipt of VLT/DPS documentation folder by the DAR Regional Office (DARRO).

In the event that they cannot agree on the price of land, the procedure for compulsory acquisition as provided in Section 16 of R.A. No. 6657 shall apply, whenever applicable.

f) The terms and conditions of VLT/DPS shall include the immediate transfer of possession and ownership of the land in favor of the identified beneficiaries, provided that the LO shall be given reasonable time to harvest the standing crops unharvested pursuant to Section 28 of R.A. No. 6657. CLOAs shall be issued to the ARBs with the proper annotations (e.g., annotation of lien in favor of the LO and that the said landholding is covered by a Deed of Voluntary Land Transfer). However, tax delinquencies incurred by the LO (natural or juridical) prior to a VLT/DPS arrangement shall be paid before the registration of the Deed of Voluntary Land Transfer/Direct Payment Scheme (DVLT/DPS).

In case of financial incapacity of the LO to pay his realty taxes, he/she may enter into an arrangement with the ARB, with the conformity of the Municipal Treasurer, for the remittance of the ARB amortization to the Municipal Treasurer until the unpaid realty taxes of the landowner plus interest in arrearages accrued prior to 15 June 1988 pursuant to Department of Finance (DOF) Local Finance Circular Nos. 2-94 dated 7 March 1994 and 2-02 dated 30 July 2002, if any, have been fully paid. Thereafter, the ARB amortization shall be remitted to the LO. This arrangement shall be included in the VLT/DPS agreement.

On the basis of this arrangement, the Municipal Treasurer concerned shall issue a realty tax clearance for the registration of the CLOAs.

Realty tax payments shall be the responsibility of the concerned ARBs from the time the DAR makes an award of the land to them, pursuant to Section 24 of R.A. No. 6657 The payment shall be made on the basis of the assessment of the Municipal Assessor's Office.

g) In case the beneficiary defaults an aggregate of three (3) annual land amortizations due to force majeure or fortuitous events, he/she shall be given a grace period of not less than one year to pay the obligation on deferred payment. This obligation shall be embodied in the VLT/DPS agreement. Otherwise, he/she shall be penalized under Article V, Section 7 of this A.O. In such case, the land shall be distributed in the following order:

1. To a qualified heir of the beneficiary who is willing to abide by the terms of the existing VLT/DPS agreement and pay for the remaining balance of the value of the land; or
2. In the absence of a qualified heir, to a new qualified beneficiary who, as a condition for such transfer or conveyance, is willing to abide by the terms of the existing VLT/DPS agreement and pay for the entire value of the land.

In the case of substitution of the beneficiary with a qualified heir, the amount amortized by the beneficiary and the improvements the latter may have introduced on the land will be credited in favor of his/her heir.

However, in case the transferee is other than an heir of the original beneficiary, the amount amortized by the original beneficiary and the cost of improvements he/she has introduced on the land may either be reimbursed to him/her in one lump sum or on installment basis.

h) All payments made by an ARB under the VLT/DPS agreement must be covered by receipts that will be issued by the LO. Upon submission by the ARB of receipts showing full payment, the Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer (PARO) concerned shall issue a Certificate of Full Payment and request the Register of Deeds (ROD) concerned for the cancellation of the encumbrance annotated at the back of the CLOA. The Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer (MARO) shall render assistance in this regard when necessary.

Refusal of the landowner to issue a receipt for every payment shall constitute a valid ground for the ARB to suspend payment to landowner and deposit the same with the LBP in the account of the landowner.

i) Lands acquired under the VLT/DPS may not be sold, transferred or conveyed except through hereditary succession, or to the government, or to the LBP, or to other qualified beneficiaries for a period of ten (10) years, provided, however, that the children or the spouse of the transferor shall have the right to repurchase the land from the government or LBP within a period of two (2) years from the date of transfer, pursuant to Section 27 of R.A. No. 6657.

j) The agreement on VLT/DPS shall be adequately explained by the MARO to the parties in the local dialect prior to its signing.

k) Lands mortgaged with banking and/or financial institutions or private individuals shall not be subject to VLT/DPS.

l) In case of disagreement during negotiations between the landowner and qualified beneficiary over the value of the land and/or the terms and conditions of the proposed VLT/DPS agreement, the parties may submit themselves to mediation by the PARO upon the request of the MARO. Should the disagreement remain unresolved after six (6) months from the date of the first conference called by the MARO, the negotiations shall be terminated and subject land shall instead be acquired by the government and transferred pursuant to compulsory acquisition under Section 16 of R.A. No. 6657.

m) Landholdings within the LO's retention limit shall not be the subject of VLT/DPS. However, VLT/DPS may be allowed if the LO waives his/her rights of retention as provided under Section 6 of A.O. No. 02, Series of 2003 and instead offers the subject area for CARP coverage in addition to his/her landholdings in excess of the retention limits provided under Section 6 of R.A. No. 6657.

n) Landholdings subject of VLT/DPS may be covered under CA or VOS if the concerned parties have not yet signed the Deed of Voluntary Land Transfer (DVLT).

Landholdings covered under CA or VOS may be allowed to be shifted to VLT/DPS mode of acquisition provided that the LBP has not yet issued a memorandum of valuation (MOV) on the subject landholding.

ARTICLE II
DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS

SEC. 3. ***Documentary Requirements*** – The following basic documents shall be required under the VLT/DPS Agreement (VLT/DPS Form No. 2).

a) *For Titled Properties and Lands Acquired Through Prescription.*

1. Certified true copy of the original copy of title on file with the ROD;
2. Certified true copy of the latest Tax Declaration;
3. Certified true copy of the approved segregation or subdivision plan with corresponding approved technical description;
4. Certified true copy of the Real Estate Tax Clearance or Statement of Tax Delinquency;
5. Certification from the ROD concerned that the property is free from liens and/or encumbrances; and
6. Certification from the LBP that the subject land has not yet been issued with MOV pursuant to Section 2(n) of this A.O.

The LO shall surrender to the DAR Municipal Office (DARMO) the original copy of duplicate certificate of title once the VLT/DPS application is approved.

b) *For Untitled Properties.*

1. Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO) Certification pursuant to DAR-DENR Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, Series of 2003, that the land is continuously occupied and cultivated by the claimant or his/her predecessors-in-interest and has been classified as alienable and disposable for at least thirty (30) years prior to the effectivity of R.A. No. 9176 on 04 December 2002;
2. Survey plan of the property/ies duly approved by the Land Management Bureau (LMB) or if not available, a sketch plan certified by the said office and a technical description thereof;
3. Certified copy of the claimant's current Tax Declaration on the property indicating the lot numbers and area per approved plan;
4. Instruments of acquisition covering the subject property, such as Deed of Sale, Donation, Transfer, etc. in favor of the claimant and those of his/her predecessor/s in interest;
5. Certification of the Assessor concerned showing the Tax Declaration issued, the declarant/s, the area covered, and the basis for the issuances and cancellations made thereon from the first declaration up to the Tax Declaration issued in the name of the claimant;
6. Certification from the Clerk of Court concerned whether or not the property is involved in land registration proceedings or a civil case and if the same was used as bond or bail in other court actions;
7. Certification from the office of the ROD and the Assessor's Office concerned that per their records, the property/ies, as appearing in the approved survey plan, is/are free from all liens and encumbrances;
8. Land Registration Authority (LRA) Certification that subject land is not within decreed property per their record; and
9. Certification from the LBP that the subject land has not yet been issued with MOV pursuant to Section 2(n) of this A.O.

ARTICLE III
OPERATING PROCEDURES

SEC. 4. ***Operating Procedures*** - The operating procedures outlined below shall be followed.

A. Application (See Annex "B" for the process flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required Forms/ Documents
LO and Prospective Beneficiary	1. Initiate the negotiation with the prospective ARBs and submit the application for VLT/DPS arrangements, together with the proposed VLT/DPS Agreement and other supporting documents under Art II, Sec. 3 of this A.O. to DARMO. The tenant-beneficiary and the other ARBs (non-tenant), whether alone or co-existing with each other, shall provide documents (e.g., affidavit, assessor's certification) as evidence that they are not disqualified under the rules to become beneficiaries of the CARP. If the prospective ARB is a child of the LO, he/she shall produce pertinent documents (e.g., leasehold contract, receipts of lease rental payments, birth certificate, corroborative affidavits of two (2) disinterested parties) to prove that indeed a tenurial relationship has been established prior to 15 June 1988 pursuant to Section 22 of R.A. No. 6657. In the event the LO waives his/her right of retention pursuant to Art. I, Sec. 2 (m) of this A.O., he/she shall execute an affidavit of waiver of rights and submit the same to the DARMO. In the case of tax delinquencies incurred by the LO, he/she shall first settle his/her outstanding obligations before entering into a VLT/DPS Agreement with the ARB. If the LO cannot pay in cash, he/she may arrange with the prospective ARB the payment of the said taxes pursuant to Art. I, Sec. 2 (f) of this A.O.	• Notice/Application for VLT/DPS(VLT/DPS Form No.1) • LO Information Sheet (Revised CARP Form No. 1.1,Annex "A")
B.Identification and Screening of ARBs (See Annex "C" for the Process Flow)		
DARMO	2. Record and review the LO's application proposed agreement with all its supporting documents.	
	3. Prepare the preliminary list of identified tenants, actual occupants or potential beneficiaries of the subject landholdings	• Priliminary List of ARBs (VLT/DPS Form No.4)
	4. Post the preliminary list of identified tenants, actual occupants or potential beneficiaries, together with a photocopy of the landowner's notice/application for VLT/DPS and the proposed VLT/DPS Agreement, for a period of fifteen (15) days in the barangay or municipal hall where the landholding is located and in public or conspicuous places in the community. In case there are objections or questions regarding the preliminary list of ARBs, the concerned party/ies may inform the DARMO on the matter within the said period of posting.	• Notice of Posting (VLT/DPS Form No.5)
DARMO and Barangay Agrarian Reform Committee (BARC)	5. Simultaneous with the period of posting: 5.1 Conduct an ocular field investigation to confirm and/or validate the following: a. Identity of the LO; b. Identity, willingness to enter into VLT/DPS as proposed by the LO, and qualification of the prospective ARB based on the following: • landless as defined in R.A. No. 6657; • Filipino citizen; • permanent resident of the barangay and/or municipality; • at least fifteen (15) years of age or head of the family at the time of acquisition of the property; and • has the willingness, ability and aptitude to cultivate and make the land productive. c. Information on the land and its current production as it pertains to the provisions of the proposed agreement; and d. Whether or not the prospective ARB is a child of the LO and determine if he/she is qualified to enter into VLT/DPS pursuant to Art. I, Sec. 2(a) and second paragraph of Art. III, Sec.4.A.1 of this A.O.	
DARMO	5.2 Gather data on the price of adjacent or surrounding landholdings with feature/s similar or comparable to the subject land for purposes of determining the value of the said land.	
DARMO, BARC and DARPO	6. The MARO shall prepare and sign the field investigation report and sworn certification that both the LO and ARB are not prohibited to enter into a VLT/DPS Agreement. Both documents shall be attested by the PARO. The sworn certification shall be duly noted by the BARC, or in the absence thereof, the Barangay Council.	• Field Investigation Report (VLT/DPS Form No.6) • Sworn Certification on Existence of Tenurial Relations Between LO and ARB (VLT/DPS Form No.7)
DARMO	7. After the fifteen-day posting, issue Certificate of Posting Compliance attested by the BARC Chairman or Barangay Chairman, or his/her authorized representative, indicating therein the inclusive dates of the posting period.	• Certificate of Posting Compliance(VLT/DPS Form No.8)
	8. Ensure that the potential ARBs meet the qualifications provided under Art. III, Sec. 4(B)(5.1)(b) of this A.O. Otherwise, disqualify the applicants to enter into VLT/DPS and inform them of the matter.	• Checklist of Qualifications of Potential ARBs (VLT/DPS Form No.9)
	9. Prepare the master list of ARBs based on the results of the ocular field investigation report and the documents submitted by the concerned parties for file and reference.	• Master List of ARBs(VLT/DPS Form No.4)
C. Signing of VLT/DPS Agreement (See Annex "D" for the Process Flow)		
	10. Immediately after the fifteen-day posting period, send invitation letter through registered mail with return card or personal delivery to LOs and ARBs included in the master list to discuss the terms and conditions of the proposed VLT/DPS Agreement.	• Letter of Invitation (VLT/DPS Form No.10)
	11. Record and prepare the minutes of the meeting and assist both parties in finalizing the VLT/DPS Agreement, explaining in detail and in the dialect known to the parties concerned the following: a. Pertinent rules and regulations governing the VLT/DPS; b. Terms and conditions stipulated in the proposed Agreement, the rights and obligations of each party and the	• Minutes of the Meeting (VLT/DPS Form No.11) • Agreement on Voluntary Land Transfer(VLT/DPS Form No.2)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
	consequences of their non-compliance thereof; and c. Process of determining land valuation.	
	12. In case of disagreement of the parties on the value of the land and/or the terms and conditions of the proposed VLT/DPS Agreement, request the PARO to mediate in resolving the disagreement within six (6) months. All pertinent documents shall be forwarded to the DARPO for reference.	• Request for Mediation (VLT/ DPS Form No.12) • Pertinent Documents
	13. Ensure that the VLT/DPS Agreement is in order and the documents and requirements are complete and properly complied with. Likewise, make sure that the VLT/ DPS Agreement is prepared in five (5) copies, all signed by the parties concerned and their witnesses.	
	14. Forward complete VLT/DPS claim folder (CF) to the PARO concerned within five (5) days after compliance of the posting requirements.	• Memorandum of Transmittal (VLT/DPS Form No.13)

D. Mediation by the DARPO (See Annex "E" for the Process Flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
DARPO	15. Immediately upon receipt of the request for mediation from the DARMO, record and resolve the disagreement within six (6) months. A report, including the concomitant recommendation, shall be prepared regardless of whether or not the issue/disagreement is resolved. The report and recommendation shall be forwarded to the DARMO for appropriate action. If an agreement has not been reached after six (6) months, the subject landholding shall be acquired and distributed in accordance with A.O. No. 02, Series of 1996.	• Memorandum of Instruction to MARO (VLT/ DPS Form No.14) • Report and Recommendation on the Disagreement (VLT/DPS Form No.15)
DARMO	16. Upon receipt of the instruction and recommendation from the PARO, prepare the VLT/DPS Agreement in accordance with this A.O., or acquire and distribute the subject landholding under compulsory acquisition in accordance with existing guidelines, whichever is appropriate.	

E. Review and Evaluation of VLT/DPS Claim Folder (See Annex "F" for the Process Flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
DARPO	17. Upon receipt of the VLT/DPS CF, record the provisional VLT/DPS Agreement in a logbook maintained for the purpose.	
	18. Review and evaluate the pertinent forms and documents contained in the VLT/DPS CF for authenticity, completeness and consistency. The VLT/DPS Agreement shall be subject to review by the Legal Officer. Likewise, conduct an ocular field investigation to validate the qualification of the prospective ARBs pursuant to Art. III, Sec. 4(B)(5.1)(b) of this Order.	
	19. If in order, forward the VLT/DPS CF to the DAR Regional Office (DARRO) with recommendation for approval of the VLT/ DPS Agreement by the Regional Director (RD). Otherwise, return the same to the DARMO for appropriate action.	
DARRO	20. Approve the agreement within thirty (30) calendar days from receipt of the VLT/DPS CF from the DARPO, otherwise return the same to the DARMO, through DARPO, for appropriate action. The VLT/DPS Agreement shall be considered approved unless a Notice/Memorandum of Disapproval is issued by the RD and received by the LO and ARB within thirty (30) days from the receipt of the VLT/DPS CF by the DARRO. However, this 30-day reglementary period may be extended upon due notice to the parties concerned in case a protest is filed or, in meritorious cases, if the RD thinks that more time is needed to evaluate the documents.	
	21. Upon approval of the Agreement, send memorandum to DARMO, through DARPO, directing them to coordinate with the survey party in the conduct of the survey of the subject landholding and execute the Deed of Voluntary Land Transfer (DVLT) between the LO and ARB. The DVLT should be with conformity of the LO's spouse. In the absence of the spouse, a Special Power of Attorney (SPA) shall be required permitting his/her spouse to have the land subjected to VLT/DPS. Otherwise, order the suspension of the processing of CF including the VLT/DPS Agreement until the matter is resolved.	• Memorandum (VLT/DPS Form No.16) • Deed of Voluntary Transfer(VLT/ DPS Form No.17)
DARPO	22. Furnish copy of the approved subdivision plan (ASP) to the DARMO.	
DARMO	23. Prepare and submit land distribution folder (LDF) to DARPO for generation of CLOAs.	

F. Generation and Registration of CLOAs and Registration of Deed of Voluntary Land Transfer (see Annex "G" for the Process Flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
DARPO	24. Receive and record the LDF, and review the same to ensure that the documents contained in the LDF are complete. In case of lacking documents, require the DARMO to submit the pertinent documents.	
	25. On the basis of the approved survey plan and LDF submitted by DARMO, generate CLOAs in the name of the ARB/s. All CLOAs generated shall contain an annotation of lien in favor of the LO and that the said landholding is covered by a Deed of Voluntary Land Transfer (DVLT), to be signed by the PARO.	
	26. Prepare the corresponding Judicial Form Utilization Worksheet (JFUW) based on the systems and procedures for the requisition, issuance, utilization and accounting of EP/CLOA Judicial Forms and forward the same, together with the CLOA, to the DARRO for signing and sealing of the CLOAs.	• CLOA-title
DARRO	27. Affix RD's initial on all error-free CLOAs.	
	28. Return erroneously generated CLOAs to DARPO for replacement.	
	29. Inscribe the signature of the Secretary and DAR seal through the signing and sealing machine.	
	30. Forward signed and sealed CLOA and the corresponding JFUW, with transmittal memorandum, to DARPO for registration.	
DARPO	31. Record signed and sealed CLOAs and enter the same in the CLOA Registry Book of the ROD.	• Signed and Sealed CLOA title
	32. Cause the registration of DVLT and CLOA with the ROD. (The registration of the VLT/DPS Agreement and the Corresponding CLOAs are free from payment of Capital Gains Tax, Registration Fee, and all other taxes and fees for the conveyance and transfer thereof pursuant to Sections 66 and 67 of R.A. No. 6657).	
	33. After registration, reflect title number and date of registration in the CLOA Registry Book.	
	34. In case of collective ownership, reproduce a registered certified photocopy of CLOA-title.	
	35. Transmit the registered Owner's Duplicate copy of the CLOA-title and certified photocopy of the same to DARMO for distribution to ARBs.	

G. Distribution of CLOA – Titles (See Annex "H" for the Process Flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
DARMO	36. Record and distribute the Owner's Duplicate copy of CLOA-title to ARBs. In case of collective ownership, furnish the ARB a certified photocopy of co-owner's duplicate CLOA-title.	
	37. Assist ARBs in securing corresponding tax declaration from the Assessor's/ Treasurer's office from the time the CLOA-title is distributed.	
	38. Maintain a logbook of all CLOA-title issued within the municipality and prepare an individual record for each ARB.	
	39. Remind the ARBs of their obligation to pay the agreed amortization to the LO when it falls due, either in cash or in kind, as stipulated in the DVLT.	

ARTICLE IV
MONITORING AND REPORTING

SEC. 5. *Monitoring* – For monitoring purposes, the following procedures shall be observed:

A. Monitoring of VLT/DPS Implementation (See Annex "I" for the Process Flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
DARMO and BARC	1. Conduct annual field inspections of landholdings under VLT/DPS in coordination with the BARC to determine the following: a. Whether or not the LO immediately transferred the possession and ownership of the land to the ARBs; b. Whether or not the ARBs or their direct compulsory heirs continuously occupy or cultivate the subject property; c. Whether or not both parties complied with the terms and conditions stipulated in the VLT/DPS Agreement; and d. Whether or not the ARB and LO strictly adhered to the prohibition and restriction on alienation of VLT/DPS.	
	2. Prepare and sign the inspection report and file the same for reference.	• Field Inspection Report on Landholding Subject of VLT/ DPS (VLT/DPS Form No.19)
DARMO	3. In the event that any of the conditions/situations provided under Art. IV, Sec. 5(A)(1) of this A.O. are found, undertake the following activities: a. In case the possession of the land covered by VLT/DPS was not immediately transferred by the LO to ARBs, the following shall be undertaken: a.1 Send invitation letter to both parties for consultation/meeting to resolve/ settle the issue; a.2 conduct and facilitate the meeting in coordination with and assistance of the BARC Chairman, or in the absence thereof, the Barangay Council; and a.3 require the LO to sign a commitment for immediate transfer of the land to the ARB. Otherwise, forward to the DARPO the unresolved issue/problem for appropriate action.	• Commitment Form (VLT/DPS Form No.19)
	b. In case the original ARB/s or their direct compulsory heir/s is/are no longer the actual occupant/s or cultivator/s of the land covered by VLT/DPS, identify and screen qualified beneficiaries in accordance with Art. III, Sec. 4(B) of this A.O. for the purpose of executing a new VLT/DPS agreement. Unresolved issues on problems shall be forwarded to the DARPO for appropriate action.	
	c. In case the terms and conditions stipulated in the VLT/DPS Agreement are not complied with, the procedures provided under Art. IV, Sec. 5(3)(a) of this A.O. shall be followed. Thereafter, require the parties to sign a commitment to abide by the terms and conditions stipulated in the VLT/DPS Agreement and file the same for reference. Otherwise, forward to the DARPO the unresolved issue/problem for appropriate action.	• Commitment Form (VLT/DPS Form No.19)
	d. In case the prohibitions and restrictions on alienation of VLT/DPS are not adhered to, follow the procedures provided under Art. IV, Sec. 5(3)(a) of this A.O. and require the concerned parties to sign the commitment form to strictly follow the pertinent provisions on this A.O. for file and reference. The unresolved issue/problem shall be forwarded to DARPO for appropriate action.	• Commitment Form (VLT/DPS Form No.19)
	4. Prepare a report on the actions taken regarding the case/s found during the field inspection and forward the same, together with the pertinent documents, to DARPO.	

B. Monitoring of Problems, Issues and Concerns at the DARPO (See Annex "J" for the Process Flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
DARPO	5. Receive and record the DARMO's report on unresolved issues regarding the abovecited conditions/situations.	• Report of Problems/Issues/ Concerns (VLT/ DPS Form No.20
	6. Review and resolved the problems, issues and concerns referred by DARMO and notify concerned parties on the matter. The PARO shall initiate and exhaust all efforts to resolve said problems, issues and concerns following the pertinent procedures outlined on this A.O.	
	7. Prepare a consolidated report of the problems, issues and concerns on VLT/DPS implementation submitted by DARMOs for reference.	• Report of Problems/ Issues/ Concerns (VLT/ DPS Form No.20)
DARPO	8. Prepare the updated status report of problems, issues and concerns on VLT/DPS implementation.	
	9. Furnish the DARMO,DARRO and DARCO a copy of the status report on problems, issues and concerns on VLT/ DPS implementation.	• Status Report on the Problems, Issues and Concern on VLT/DPS Implementation (VLT/DPS Form No. 21)

C. Compliance Audit by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) (See Annex "K" for the Process Flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
Provincial and Regional IAS	10. Conduct annual audit on the compliance with this A.O.; and	
	11. Prepare and submit audit report to IAS Central Office.	• IAS Audit Report
DARCO-IAS	12. Upon receipt of the audit report submitted by the Provincial/Regional IAS, review the same and consolidate in one report for information and appropriate action, if necessary.	
	13. Submit the consolidated report together with its audit recommendation to the Office of the Secretary (OSec).	
OSEC	14. File, review and/or undertake appropriate action. If necessary, on the submitted audit report.	

SEC. 6. *Reporting* – For reporting purposes, the following procedures shall be observed: (See Annex "L" for the Process Flow)

Responsible Person/Unit	Activity	Required forms/ Documents
DARMO	1. Every quarter, prepare the master list of all landholdings covered by VLT/DPS stating the corresponding names of the LO and ARBs of different landholdings.	• Master List of Agricultural Lands Covered by VLT/ DPS (VLT/DPS Form No. 22)
	2. Forware d the master list of all landholdings to DARPO and maintain file.	
DARPO	3. Based on the record and consolidated master list of landholdings under VLT/DPS submitted by DARMO, prepare an accomplishment report on VLT/DPS.	
	4. Submit the accomplishment report and consolidated report to DARCO, copy furnished the DARRO.	
DARRO	5. Receive the above reports from DARPO for reference.	
DARCO-BLAD	6. Consolidate, evaluate and analyze the accomplishment reports submitted by DARPOs.	
	7. Prepare and submit the national accomplishment report on VLT/DPS to the following offices/units: a. Planning Service; and b. Management Information Service.	

ARTICLE V
SANCTIONS

SEC. 7 - *Penalties on Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries.* Should the ARB, for reasons other than force majeure or fortuitous events, default in his/her obligation to pay an aggregate of three (3) annual amortizations, or the equivalent thereof, to the LO or deliberately fails to comply with any provision of the agreement or of this A.O., he/she shall be penalized with the following:

1. Permanent disqualification as a beneficiary under CARP pursuant to Section 20 (c) of R.A. No. 6657 and M.C. No. 19, Series of 1996 titled, "Guidelines and Procedures Governing the Monitoring of Violations or Circumventions Committed by the ARBs, Providing Sanctions Therefor and Filing of Appropriate Administrative Quasi-Judicial and/or Criminal Actions";
2. Cancellation of any CLOA issued pursuant to A.O. No. 02, Series of 1994 titled, "Rules Governing the Correction and Cancellation of Registered/Unregistered Emancipation Patents (EPs) and Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs) Due to Unlawful Acts and Omissions or Breach of Obligations of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (ARBs) and for Other Causes"; and
3. Forfeiture of all payments made by the disqualified beneficiary in favor of the landowner. Land payments shall be treated as lease rentals. Should there be non-payment of land for the time that the disqualified ARB remained in possession of the land, the value of lease rentals for the use of the land shall be assessed in accordance with the provisions of R.A. No. 3844, as amended.

SEC. 8. *Penalties on Landowners* - The LO who willfully prevents or obstructs the implementation of the CARP shall be penalized pursuant to Section 74 of R.A. No. 6657 and shall no longer be allowed to apply for VLT/DPS. The subject land shall immediately be covered through compulsory acquisition.

The concerned RD or PARO shall file a case against the LO before the proper court.

SEC. 9. *Administrative Sanctions* - Applications for VLT/DPS shall be processed strictly in accordance with this A.O. Administrative sanctions shall be imposed on DAR field personnel, without prejudice to the filing of criminal and civil actions, who have willfully, feloniously, and/or negligently processed VLT/ DPS folders and circumvented the provisions of this A.O. resulting to the transfer of agricultural lands to individuals who are not actually qualified beneficiaries under CARP.

ARTICLE VI
FINAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 10. *Transitory Provision* - In order to prevent delays in the processing, evaluation and approval of all VLT/DPS claim folders already forwarded to or pending at the DARRO shall continue to be processed under A.O. No. 8, Series of 1997. However, all VLT/DPS claim folders still in the DARMOs and DARPOs at the time of the effectivity of these guidelines shall be governed by this Administrative Order.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause* - All orders, circulars, rules and regulations inconsistent herewith are hereby revoked, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity* - This Administrative Order shall take effect ten (10) days after its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation pursuant to Section 49 of R.A. No. 6657.

Dilman, Quezon City, 23 December 2003.

ROBERTO M. PAGDANGANAN
Secretary

Roco taps an Aquino for his running mate

From page A1

Jan. 5 because it was his "lucky day." Perfecto Yasay Jr., former head of the Securities and Exchange Commission, earlier filed his COC as senatorial candidate.

About 500 Roco supporters, many of them in the floral printed shirts that Roco prefers, carried colorful posters and banners and cheered just outside the Comelec entrance. There were even a handful of teenagers who came in *gumamela* costumes.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos, who was just reporting in, met Roco and his contingent on the street after they left the Comelec premises.

Best alternative

"We filed our candidacies on Dec. 30, dedicated to Jose Rizal," Roco said. "Our full ticket we submit to the Filipino people as the first and best alternative in the May 2004 elections."

As an independent, Roco lacks the money and party machinery of leading administration and opposition candidates.

But the eloquent speaker, who is popular among students and young professionals, ranks in the top two or three in opinion polls and boasts an army of volunteers that helped him place third in the 1998 presidential election.

While at least 40 hopefuls are seeking the highest office, the four serious contenders are movie star Fernando Poe Jr., Roco, President Macapagal-Arroyo and opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

But Roco's ability to mount a significant challenge—or at least splinter the vote further—cannot be discounted. On an issue that resounds with many Filipinos, he claims to be among the few politicians still faithful to the anti-corruption fervor of the "People Power" uprisings that ousted President Joseph Estrada in 2001 and the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.

Pause

When Roco announced Aquino's name at the Luneta, there was a slight pause before his supporters cheered.

Aquino said Roco and allies Renato de Villa and Lito Osmeña only informed him of their plan on Monday night. "I was the most surprised," he recalled. "I was laughing. I thought they were joking."

Aquino had been helping Roco put up his political machinery. But he had largely remained in the background in the campaign.

Aquino said Roco convinced him while they were on their way to Luneta from Quezon City. "He said they needed me and appealed to my sense (of duty) to help them," he said. Aquino got to know Roco in 1987 when they were starting out as congressmen.

For real

Aquino said he was not even able to inform his wife first. He later said that his candidacy was "for real" and that he was presenting himself to the Filipino people as an "alternative."

Nothing apparently came out of Roco's talks with other would-be running mates. In October, Roco, a Bicolano, said he preferred a Visayan running mate. He cited Senate President Franklin Drilon, Senators Manuel Villar and Loren Legarda, Trade Secretary Mar Roxas and Osmeña as good choices.

Villar was reportedly seriously wooed by Roco's camp.

Osmeña declined to run. When he first ran for president in 1998, Roco picked civic leader and political neophyte Irene "Inday" Santiago as his running mate.

Angelito Banayo, political adviser of presidential candidate Panfilo Lacson, said Aquino's vice presidential candidacy was a "total surprise."

"Definitely, he's (Aquino) very accomplished but it's surprising because nobody mentioned him before," Banayo said in a phone interview.

Even to his own political allies and province mates in Tarlac, Aquino's entry into the vice presidential race came as a surprise.

Board Member Alvin Belarmino, who ran with Aquino's ticket when he ran and lost for governor in 2001, was worried that Aquino was just a proxy candidate.

Natural team

Roco denied that he had run out of choices. "From the beginning I've always said I am partial to those who are with me," he said at a news conference after he filed his COC.

He said Aquino was the only "genuinely qualified" vice presidential candidate based on "record, experience and genetic construction."

De Villa and Osmeña also made the same denials in separate interviews. Aquino said "there were (other) candidates" considered, but he did not name anyone.

He said Roco, De Villa and Osmeña thought he would "complement" Roco because he had been organizing his team since early this year. "I guess ... we're a natural team," he said.

Aquino was a three-term congressman from the third district of Tarlac from 1987 to 1998. As congressman, Aquino was the principal author of Republic Act No. 7683, which created the Department of Energy.

He teamed up with former Gov. Margarita "Tingting" Cojuangco in 1998 and won as the province's vice governor. In 2001, he ran for governor but lost to Yap.

General's son

During the presidency of her niece-in-law Corazon Aquino, he was appointed deputy executive secretary and minister of human settlements.

Aquino was chair of various government agencies such as the Technology Livelihood and Resource Center, Southern Philippines Development Authority, National Electrification Administration and Guarantee Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise. He was also general manager of the Human Settlements Development Corp.

Aquino, who was born on April 25, 1949, has a degree in economics from the Ateneo de Manila University (with honors) and a master's degree in business management from the Asian Institute of Management.

He is the youngest son of the late Gen. Servillano Aquino, a veteran of the 1896 Philippine Revolution in whose honor the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Northern Luzon Command in Tarlac City was named.

He is married to Ma. Victoria Guanzon, a daughter of former Negros Occidental Rep. Romeo Guanzon. They have four children. ***With reports from Martin Marfil and Christine O. Avendaño in Manila; Jo Clemente and Russell Arador, PDI Central Luzon Desk and Reuters***

It's ABS-CBN vs ABS-CBN in vice presidential race

From page A1

He also said De Castro's decision to run for vice president indicated that Ms Macapagal was "a worthy presidential candidate."

"Noli leads not only the surveys for vice presidential contenders but also those seeking the presidency," Villarama said. "Now that he has decided to slide down to No. 2, all the more will he widen his gap over [the others]." Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lakas, Surigao del Sur) said De Castro's one advantage over Legarda was that he would be running under the administration banner.

"Noli will have the backing of the administration's political machinery, which can generate more votes. This will be an add-on for him," Pichay said in a separate interview.

Pichay also said the ABS-CBN media network would "play neutral in a Noli-Loren fight."

"No one will enjoy an ABS-CBN advantage over the other, and it will be up to their individual capability to campaign," he said.

Both Legarda and De Castro topped the senatorial elections—she in 1988 and he in 2001.

But Pichay noted that Legarda's mass appeal could not be discounted.

"It could be a dead heat between Noli and Loren. Aside from her beauty, Loren has more experience in governance compared to Noli," he said.

De Castro has resumed his "Magandang Gabi, Bayan" program over ABS-CBN, thus keeping himself in the public eye.

Tough fight

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon and Senate President Franklin Drilon agreed that if Legarda became Poe's running mate, the vice presidential race would be a toss-up between her and De Castro.

Drilon said it would be a "tough fight" for Legarda, but Biazon saw it as a "tough fight for both."

"No one knows who will win between them," Biazon told reporters, and expressed the belief that the fight between the two would "raise the chances of a third vice presidential candidate."

So far, only former Tarlac Rep. Herminio Aquino has filed his certificate of candidacy for vice president under Raul Roco's Alliance of Hope.

Mike Romero, spokesperson of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino faction supporting Poe's candidacy, said De Castro was "always a threat."

But in the event that the Poe-Legarda tandem became a reality, then "we have a strong team," he said, and acknowledged that Legarda was "the most prominent" among the persons recommended as Poe's running mate.

Non-transferable

Lito Banayo, Sen. Panfilo Lacson's political adviser, does not think De Castro's popularity will pull in the votes for Ms Macapagal.

"[His] popularity is non-transferable and will not benefit [the President]. The vote for president is not automatically the vote for the vice president, or vice versa," Banayo said in a statement.

He said past elections had shown that people did not vote for a tandem because the two candidates tended to have varying political perspectives.

He also said this was why Lacson wanted Bayani Fernando, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority, as running mate: "They represent the same perspective [and] principle, and they both have an impressive track record in service."

Lacson filed on Monday his certificate of candidacy for president.

Biazon, who is seeking reelection under Roco's Alliance of Hope, agreed that De Castro's team-up with the President "would not boost her chances."

No objection

"It's because we vote for individuals, and not for a team," he said.

From his detention quarters at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, ousted President Joseph Estrada denied rejecting Legarda as Poe's running mate.

"I have no objection to her running with Ronnie if that is what he wants," Estrada said, referring to his bosom buddy by the latter's nickname.

But Estrada admitted that his loyalists were hurt when Legarda voted for the opening of the second envelope containing bank records of the "Jose Velarde" account during his impeachment trial at the Senate.

Asked whether his wife, Sen. Luisa Estrada, and his son, former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada, were the ones opposed to a Poe-Legarda team-up, Estrada said the two had "no comment" on the matter.

"As a presidential candidate, Ronnie should be given the chance to choose his vice president. The final say will come from him," Estrada said.

He said his role in the selection of the opposition candidate for vice president was "purely recommendatory."

Earlier, he endorsed Sen. Gregorio Honasan and former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago as possible candidate for vice president. *With a report from Armand Nocum*

Palace hails De Castro

From page A1

P500 million and P750 million according to the grapevine—to slide down to the No. 2 spot.

But Bunye dismissed this as "totally without basis."

"In the first place, we don't have that much money," he said. "Everybody can make this allegation; this is part of the game."

Presidential candidate Raul Roco merely shrugged off news of the GMA-Kabayan tandem.

"*Wala, wala kaming* reaction (We have no reaction). Congratulations," the former senator flatly told reporters after filing his certificate of candidacy yesterday.

But he declared that his slate was the "most qualified" among all the candidates.

Roco's running mate and political adviser, former Tarlac Rep. Herminio Aquino, said he would do his best to make a contribution to Roco's campaign.

Asked how he felt about running against De Castro, he said with a laugh: "It has not sunk in."

'Meralco candidate'

According to opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., De Castro will be "hard put to defend" the issue of the Manila Electric Co.'s controversial purchased power adjustment.

"He is identified as a Meralco candidate," Pimentel said.

The Lopez family, which owns Meralco, Benpres Holdings, Maynilad Water Services and ABS-CBN, helped De Castro win a Senate seat in 2001.

Ms Macapagal, however, described De Castro as a "media educator and communicator without par, in search of truth and justice for the poor."

She said that she respected De Castro as a senator and leader, and that she knew he would make "a good vice president."

She aired the reasons why she pursued him as a running mate for weeks: "He has touched more lives than anyone of us, myself included, by advocating social and criminal justice through the broadcast media. He draws his broad constituency from the millions of Filipinos who track his sharp investigative journalism and commentary."

Ms Macapagal also said her administration's "proven clout and experience to run the economy" would be given an "indispensable boost" by De Castro "in terms of broadening popular appreciation and understanding."

Bunye said these factors made the GMA-Kabayan tandem a "good combination."

He said Metro Manila Development Authority chair Bayani Fernando, who had aspired to be the President's running mate, should take a cue from Sen. Robert Barbers who withdrew a similar aspiration for the sake of unity. "

"We hope Chair Fernando would think things over very thoroughly and act in the best interest of the country," Bunye said.

'By a landslide'

The multisectoral organization Kabayan for President Movement (KPM) has downgraded its name and objective to the Kabayan for Vice President Movement.

The KPM, which had earlier claimed to have gathered around two million signatures for De Castro's presidential candidacy, announced that it would continue to campaign nationwide for him.

"We believe Senator de Castro is the country's next vice presidentm and he will surely win by a landslide," KPM spokesperson Isko Catibayan said, adding:

"He could have won as president, more so now as vice president. It's all for love of country and service to the Filipino. His will be a unifying and inspiring vice presidency."

But the KPM, which claims to be made up mostly of professionals and small and medium-scale businessmen, is not saying if it would also support Ms Macapagal and the rest of her ticket in 2004.

"A position on that matter has yet to be decided," Catibayan told the INQUIRER.

But the militant fisherfolk group Pamalakaya said that even with De Castro, millions of voters would still frustrate Ms Macapagal's ambition for a full six-year term as President.

"Senator De Castro is not even a factor to change the political mood and current sentiment against the President. While Kabayan might win as vice president, Ms Macapagal just won't. Rejection becomes her," Pamalakaya information officer Gerry Albert Corpuz said in a statement.

'Psychological boost'

Pimentel also said De Castro's popularity would not automatically translate into votes for the President.

"Psychologically, it's a good boost to have a winner for vice president teaming up with her. But historically speaking, the psychological boost is good only for a few days. The end game shows that popular VPs win to the prejudice of the most popular presidential teammates," Pimentel said.

He cited the case of Ms Macapagal herself, who was the running mate of Speaker Jose de Venecia in 1998. She won as vice president but De Venecia lost.

He said this likewise proved true in 1992 when Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco lost the presidency to Fidel Ramos, but the businessman's running mate—then Sen. Joseph Estrada—won by a landslide.

Pimentel also said that even De Castro's popularity, particularly in radio and TV, was not beyond question.

He said the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino was ready to face "whoever they want to put up" as Ms Macapagal's running mate.

"Senator De Castro will win assuming that the opposition's VP candidate is weak, which we do not concede," Pimentel said, adding that Sen. Loren Legarda or former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago could easily demolish De Castro's candidacy. ***Reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr., Norman Bordadora, Michael Lim Ubac, Dona Z. Pazzibugan, Cynthia D. Balana***

Bro. Eddie defies GMA, files candidacy

From page A1

party Lakas was "understanding."

"I believe they are all statesmen, and being such, they would not take offense at my decision. They know I love my country," he said in a press conference at the Commission on Elections office in Intramuros, after becoming the 44th presidential aspirant to file a COC.

Villanueva, who presented himself as standard-bearer of the Bangon Pilipinas National Renewal Movement party, is spiritual director of the 25-year-old Jesus is Lord Church Worldwide movement, which claims a membership of about five million here and abroad.

Some 10,000 of these followers attended the proclamation rally earlier in Malolos, chanting "Pagbabago (Change)!" as their candidate walked up the Bulacan State University grandstand to address them.

The hourlong speech was punctuated as much by wild cheering as Brother Eddie's own weeping and lamentation. He described himself as a David challenging Goliath, but repeatedly referred to his "call to duty" as coming from God, who "rules over Malacañang Palace."

That was why, he said, "*hindi pa ko nagpo-proklama, takot na takot na sila* (I had not yet been proclaimed, they were already terrified)."

He vowed to redeem the country from such labels as "sick man of Asia," "nation of prostitutes and domestic helpers," and "11th most corrupt country in the world."

"We have been overtaken by our Asian neighbors, even Vietnam, and we are now in the league of Bangladesh," he pointed out.

There was an urgent need for "an honest and clean leader," Villanueva said, and "the devil" would do everything to force him out of the race. But he said the Lord had saved him from various brushes with death as a political activist—including assassination attempts by the military—"for a divine purpose," and there was no way he was backing down.

In the Malolos rally were military men led by retired Gen. Honesto Isleta, Filipino-Chinese business leaders, imams and Sultanate of Sulu royalty, members of farmers, drivers, women and youth organizations, and leaders of various religious congregations.

Also present were Mayor Ambrocio Cruz of Guiguinto and Mayor Jaime Viceo Jr. of San Rafael, publicist George Balagtas, and political strategist Tony Gatmaitan.

Villanueva asked the crowd not to allow "vote-buying and deceit" in the May 10, 2004 elections. He himself would not be cowed or bought, he said, because "the world is too poor to buy my conviction and principles."

His fight was not about religion, politics, or anyone's interests, he stressed. "This is about survival. We should not just watch our leaders; we should participate actively and be instrumental in effecting changes."

Pending the approval of his party's application for accreditation, Villanueva is considered an "independent" candidate. But he expressed confidence that the Comelec would accredit Bangon, citing the assurance of Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos.

Besides, Villanueva said, his political machinery was complete and, in fact; prepared to "surprise" traditional politicians.

At the moment, "independent" could also refer to the fact that Villanueva does not have a running mate or a senatorial slate. But he said his party would meet before Jan. 5, the last day of filing for candidacies, to decide whether or not to field other candidates.

Actually, he said, he preferred to run alone, since recruiting for a slate might just cause division among prospects from other political parties.

"I do not wish to establish a political career," he explained. "I am not beholden to any politicians. My running is just an emergency, a call to duty."

GMA offers aid to purge victims

From page A1

in Southern Tagalog, "Olympia" in Metro Manila and "Kampanyang Ahos" in Mindanao, but they carry the scars of physical and mental torture at the hands of their former comrades.

"As part of the overall healing process, we are also prepared to offer welfare services or therapeutic treatment for survivors or victim's kin," the President said.

The families of the victims, survivors and their friends have formed the Peace Advocates for Truth, Justice and Healing (PATH) to look for the remains and to seek justice, healing and closure.

Ms Macapagal said she would support the creation of a truth commission that will look into the purges.

"As part of the national reconciliation process, I am in favor of a truth commission which will look into such travesties of justice and see to it that the culprits own up to these, before being considered for any form of forgiveness under the law such as amnesty or clemency," she said.

"It is an elementary principle of reconciliation with justice that one must own up to a wrong first, before being forgiven," the President said.

She said she had been periodically briefed by the Armed Forces about the "so-called internal purges in the local communist movement."

The President asked anyone with information about the "crimes" to come forward. "There can be no justification for these serious crimes. If anyone has proof related to these crimes, I encourage them to come out with the truth and they will be given ample protection," she said.

"We have a witness protection system for those who are qualified for it. The quest for justice for the victims must be sustained as part of our universal adherence to the supremacy of human rights," she added.

The President said the government panel was willing to raise the complaints of the survivors and bereaved families before the negotiating team of the National Democratic Front of which the CPP is a member.

"The peace negotiations with the NDF can take these complaints under cognizance since we already have a Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL)," she said.

"If there are verified complaints, I see no reason why these cases cannot be taken up alongside the negotiations as a confidence building measure."

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

28,000 bodies recovered from rubble

BAM, Iran—The official death toll from the earthquake in southeast Iran rose to 28,000 Tuesday, as President Mohammad Khatami promised to rebuild the devastated city of Bam within two years.

IRANIAN women in traditional dresses attend a mass burial of the victims of the earthquake in the ancient Silk Road city of Bam in southeast Iran on Dec. 29. REUTERS

State radio quoted local officials as saying that 28,000 bodies had been recovered from the rubble in Bam and surrounding villages and buried, but predicting that the final toll could top 30,000.

Only 2,000 people have been pulled out alive since Friday's quake destroyed the historic city, including its ancient citadel, a world architectural heritage site and a major tourist attraction.

"The town of Bam must reappear on the map of Iran," Khatami said during a meeting Monday with members of his government, local officials and military officers in the quake-hit area at Bam airport.

"The town will be reconstructed in two years," the radio quoted the reformist president, whose supporters are facing the loss of their parliamentary majority in February elections, as saying.

"We must talk of the living, and try to reconstruct the affected areas," Khatami said.

Earlier Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also pledged that Bam, which was constructed largely of mud brick, would be rebuilt but more solidly.

Seventy percent of Bam was destroyed in the quake which measured 6.7 on the Richter scale.

According to public radio, the Iranian central bank has decided to suspend for a year the repayment of debts owed by residents in the quake-hit region.

The bank will also put up around half the cost of building 10,000 new homes in the city, which had a population of some 100,000 living in 15,000 houses before the quake.

As relief continued to pour in from abroad, tens of thousands of people spent another night in the open in freezing temperatures which have compounded fears of disease and illness.

With no hopes of anyone left alive in the ruins, the main rescue effort has given way to a body recovery and clean-up operation.

The oil-rich Gulf states late Monday earmarked $400 million of aid for victims of the earthquake, hours after the United Nations appealed for more money as it began assessing the damage.

The decision was taken at an extraordinary meeting in Riyadh of finance and economy ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

UN agencies, working around the clock since the quake struck, have already given about half a million dollars (400,000 euros), but Rashid Khalikov, deputy director of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said "we need much more."

Khalikov called the international response "swift and generous," but added, "we have to think about tomorrow and the week after tomorrow and two or three months after tomorrow."

"We will assess the needs together with the government of Iran and then we hope we will be able to design the proper response... in terms of projects," he explained Monday.

"And then we will be able to go back to the donor community asking for funding," Khalikov said. "We badly need now cash grants."

Representatives from more than 20 countries, including the United States, the European Union members and Norway, met in Geneva with UN aid agencies and Red Cross officials to discuss the disaster and how best to respond.

But Khalikov said: "The biggest fear is that as soon as the news about the earthquake disappears from TV screens it will be reflected in support from the international community in terms of contributions to the activities to help the victims."

The United Nations Children's Fund has sent more than 45 tons of supplies, including health care kits and blankets for the tens of thousands of children affected by the disaster, the UN said in a statement. *AFP*

Dead mother's embrace saves baby's life

BAM, Iran—A baby girl cradled in her dead mother's arms was rescued from the rubble of a collapsed building in Bam, officials said on Monday—a rare moment of joy amid the devastation of Iran's earthquake.

Red Crescent aid officials said the mother's protective embrace had shielded 6-month-old Nassim from falling debris and saved her life.

The rest of her family, which officials said included sisters and brothers, were found dead.

Details of Nassim's recovery are still sketchy.

One Red Crescent Society official said the girl was discovered on Monday a full 72 hours after the quake, but rescue officials and state television later said she had been found after 37 hours.

"She is alive because of her mother's embrace," Hessamoddin Farrokhyar, Red Crescent public relations deputy director in Tehran, said. "The baby girl is in good condition considering the circumstances."

He said the girl was found in the southern part of Bam. It was not clear how she survived without food or water.

Temperatures at night have been bitterly cold.

Iranian state television also reported Nassim's rescue, a sliver of hope on an otherwise bleak day when the death toll climbed toward 30,000. *Reuters*

REICHSMARSHAL Hermann Goering stands in the prisoner's dock at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial in Germany in this Nov. 21, 1945 file photo. As in the trials arising from World War II, Saddam Hussein could try to shift the blame or turn the tables on his accusers. AP

Saddam admits sending $40 billion out of Iraq

BAGHDAD—The interrogation of Saddam Hussein yielded more information with the deposed leader acknowledging sending $40 billion abroad, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council said in published remarks. The Iraqi official said Saddam had provided the names of people who know where the money is.

In central Baghdad on Tuesday, rebels detonated a roadside bomb as a US convoy drove by a densely populated residential area, killing one Iraqi and wounding another, police said.

No US troops were injured, said police Maj. Khatan Jabir.

In Monday's report about Saddam, the US-appointed council estimated that the Iraqi dictator seized $40 billion while in power. The council is now searching for that amount deposited in Switzerland, Japan, Germany and other countries, council member Iyad Allawi told the London-based Arab newspapers Al-Hayat and Asharq al-Awsat.

"Saddam has started to give information on money that has been looted from Iraq and deposited abroad," Allawi told Asharq al-Awsat. "Investigation is now concentrated on his relationship with terrorist organizations and on the money paid to elements outside Iraq."

Allawi said Saddam, who has been questioned by US interrogators since his capture this month, gave names of people who know where the money is deposited and also know the location of arms and ammunition depots used by insurgents in attacks against the coalition forces and the Governing Council.

"We have asked international legal and specialized companies to follow up the money he has deposited in Switzerland, Germany, Japan and other countries which is estimated at around $40 billion under fictitious companies' names," Allawi told Al-Hayat. *AP*

Vatican envoy to Burundi killed

BUJUMBURA—The Vatican's ambassador to Burundi died Monday after he was shot in an ambush the army blamed on rebels refusing to sign up to a peace deal to end a civil war.

Archbishop Michael Courtney, an Irishman, was hit in the head, shoulder and leg Monday when his car was attacked south of the capital, the military said.

The 58-year-old papal nuncio died in a Bujumbura hospital less than three hours later, an official there said. "We were trying everything we could to save him. We were trying to extract the bullets and he died while we were operating," he said.

Chief of army staff Gen. Germain Niyoyankana pinned the blame for the attack on rebels from the National Liberation Forces (FNL), the only remaining active rebel group in a decade-long conflict that has claimed around 300,000 lives—a war in which Courtney played an active mediating role.

"We are sure the FNL is responsible for this monstrosity," Niyoyankana said.

An FNL spokesperson vehemently denied the accusation and in turn blamed the army.

Pasteur Habimana said the army was behind the ambush "as they are the only ones in the area" of Minago, about 40 km south of the capital.

President Domitien Ndayizeye said whoever carried out the attack knew whom they were targeting.

"Because the nuncio was in his usual car with all its distinctive markings, I am all but persuaded that the person who shot at him did it on purpose," he told reporters. *AFP*

SARS returns to haunt China

BEIJING—The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome virus returned to haunt China for the first time in six months Tuesday as a suspected case in southern Guangdong province was upgraded to a confirmed case.

"The case has been confirmed," Feng Shaoming, spokesperson for the Guangdong Center for Disease Control, said. "Our experts at the Center for Disease Control have made many tests and they are all positive."

Three experts from the WHO were in the provincial capital of Guangzhou Tuesday and were going over the test results, Feng said.

He acknowledged that the case would not be officially upgraded to a confirmed case until the Ministry of Health made a formal announcement, which he expected to be forthcoming.

"So far the Ministry of Health has not announced it, nor has the World Health Organization. I don't know when they will, it is up to them, but our experts here have confirmed it."

Wang Maowu, director of disease control at the national-level Chinese Center for Disease Control, said an official statement was likely to be issued Wednesday.

"Our work still needs to be done," Wang said.

Roy Wadia, WHO's Beijing-based spokesperson said that no official confirmation of the case had come out of the Ministry of Health and that the WHO was trying to contact their ministry counterparts.

"We are trying to get confirmation with the Ministry of Health, we are also trying to contact our team in Guangzhou to get clarification," Wadia said.

"So far we have no official word ourselves."

China's health ministry announced Saturday the discovery of a suspected SARS case in a 32-year-old man in the Guangdong provincial capital of Guangzhou, near where the virus was first detected in Foshan city on Nov. 16 last year.

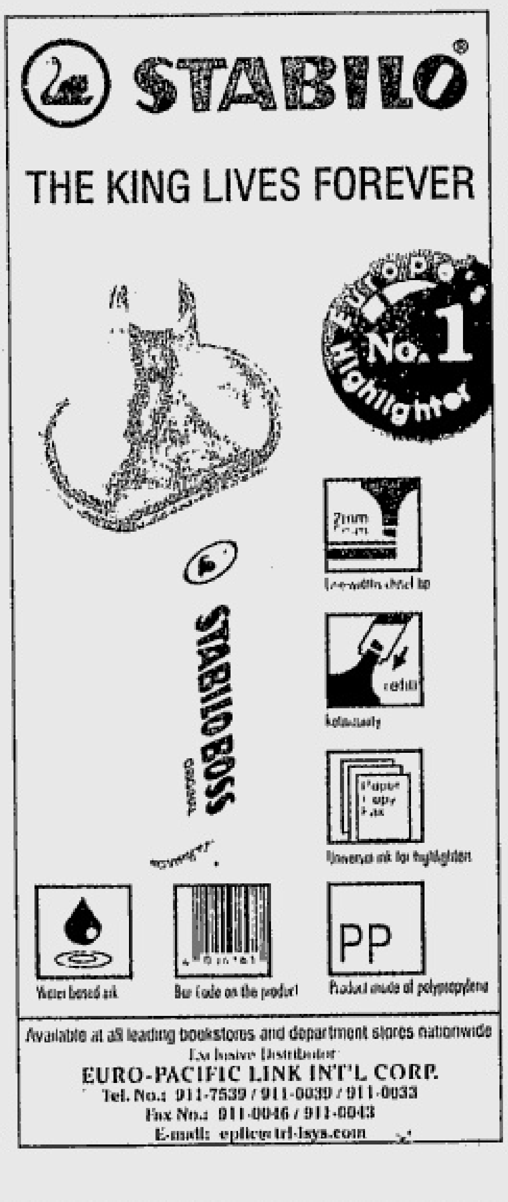
Panyu city, where the freelance journalist, identified only as Luo, comes from is barely 40 km from Foshan.

Scientists suspect the SARS epidemic may have originated from wild animals sold for food in Guangdong's markets.

Luo developed a fever on Dec. 16 and was hospitalized with pneumonia in the right lung on Dec. 20.

While both Singapore and Taiwan have reported SARS cases since the epidemic petered out in July, they were traced to laboratories where research had been conducted on the virus rather that to the general population.

On Tuesday, the WHO team in Guangzhou met with the patient, Hong Kong radio reported. *AFP*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DIABETES CORNER

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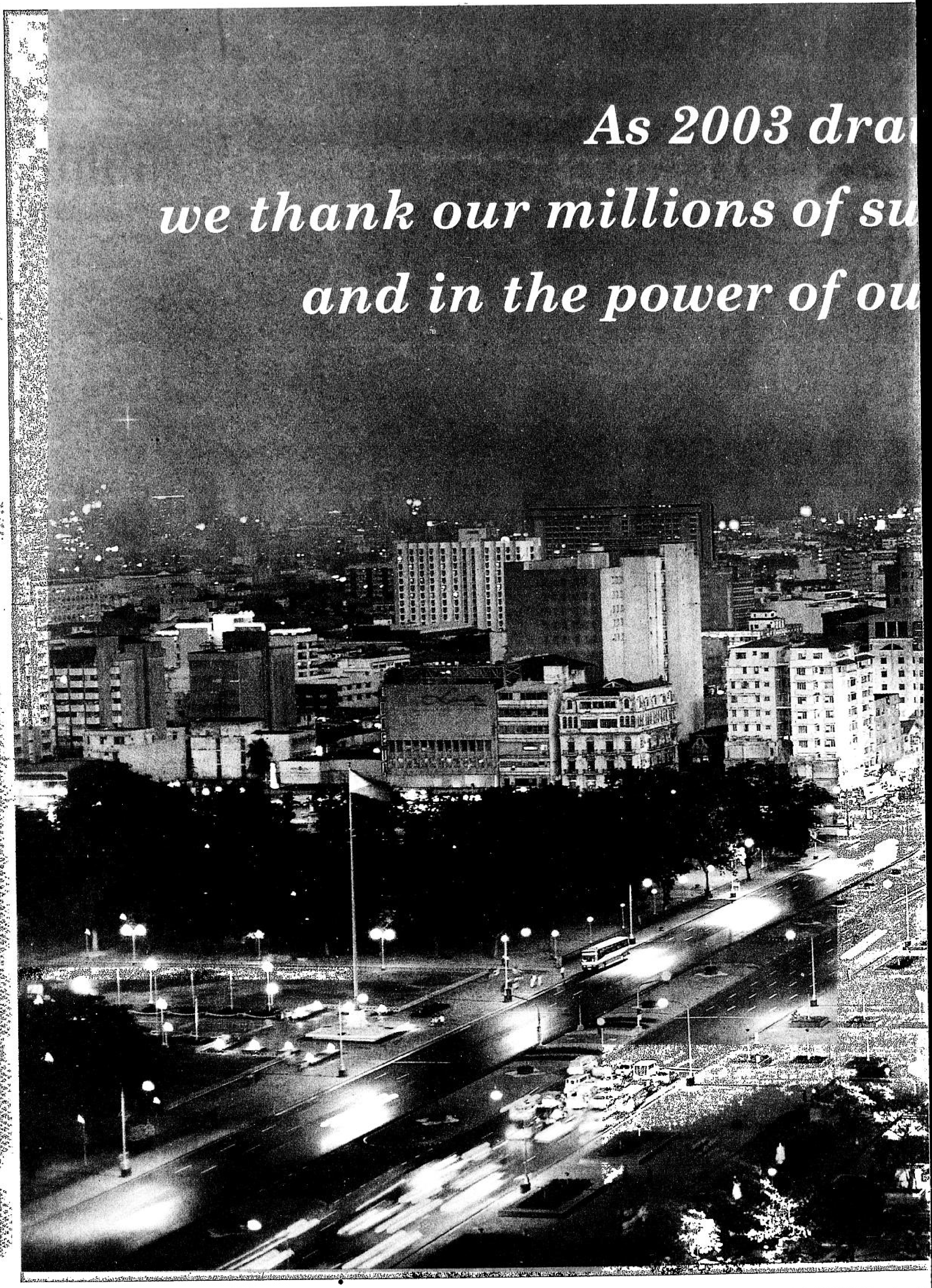

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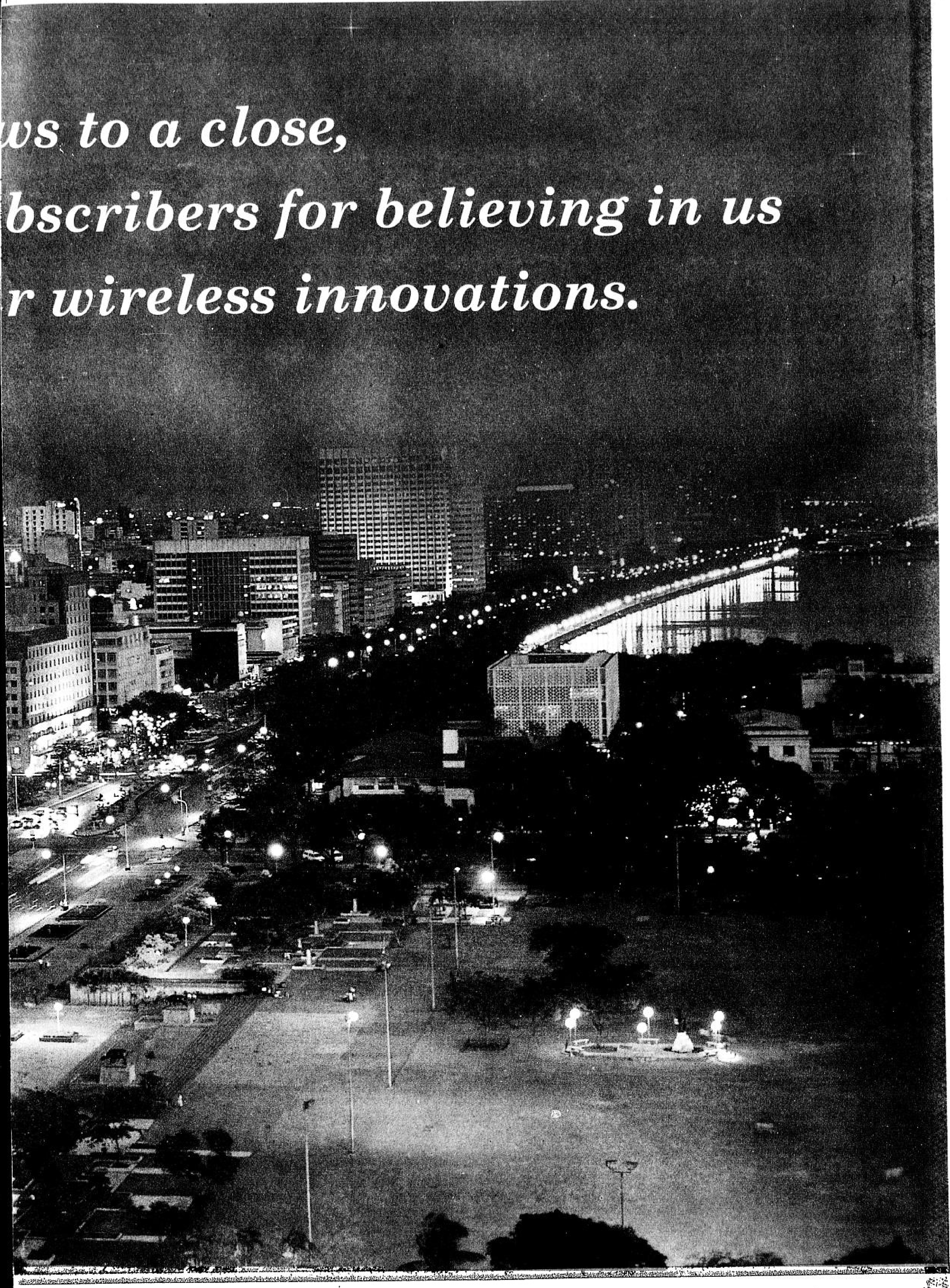

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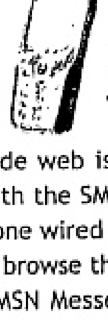

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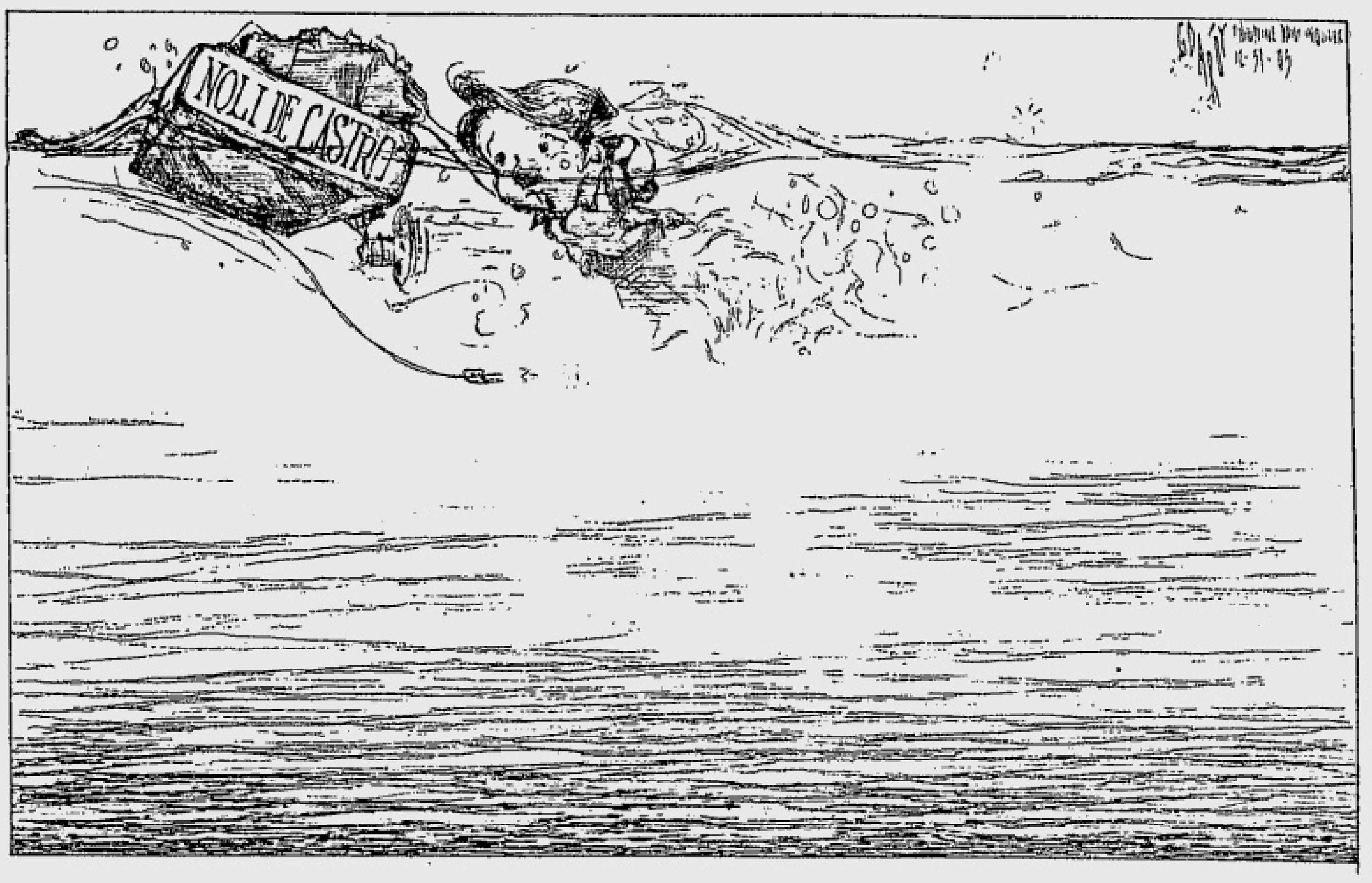

Timely warning

EDITORIAL

IT has become a tradition of sorts for the INQUIRER to try to spoil the fun for the many Filipinos whose idea of celebrating puts lives in danger, including their own. The practice of throwing at our readers the grim statistics of revelers and mere observers killed or injured as the nation welcomes the New Year started more than 10 years ago. It was interrupted only last year by President Macapagal-Arroyo's explosive promise (since revoked) not to aspire for the presidency in 2004 so that she could heal the divisions of which she was one of the principal causes. But since she has not reversed herself again and renewed her pledge of a year ago, it seems only fitting that we revive the practice of reminding Filipinos about the deaths, destruction and mayhem caused by our New Year celebrations.

The reminder or warning is a timely one. In fact, for more than a hundred Filipinos it already comes too late, to their sorrow and regret. Over a period of 10 days ending last Monday, a total of 136 persons have been brought to 50 different hospitals for treatment of injuries caused by firecrackers, according to the Department of Health. Seven others suffered burns from pyrotechnics and two were hit by bullets during the same period.

DOH officials say the number of casualties so far represents a 51-percent increase over the 89 cases reported during the same period last year. And because of the sharp rise in the number of cases even before the big bang of the New Year's Eve revelry, health authorities already see a reversal of the downward trend in total holiday casualties during the last few years.

Four years ago when Filipinos welcomed the new century, 1,568 people suffered injuries caused by firecrackers, fireworks and firearms. Two years later, the number of casualties went down to 593, and last year it was cut further to 503. But health authorities fear that if the present upward trend holds until Jan. 5, when the holiday season officially ends, the number of cases would top the 1,000 mark again.

Health authorities are hard put to explain the sharp rise in the number of victims in the run-up to the New Year's Eve celebration. It could be because some types of firecrackers and pyrotechnics have become cheaper, they say. Or maybe it is because the TV ads depicting the gory outcomes of some New Year celebrations are no longer being given prominence.

Maybe. But what is certain is that there has been another failure to implement the law prohibiting the manufacture, sale and use of powerful firecrackers like the *super lolo, super bawang* and *pla-pla*. There were more urgent matters to attend to scuch as running after kidnappers, the police say. So it is only now that they are scrambling to ensure a safer New Year's Eve celebration, with the police vowing to go after violators of the law and even muzzling their firearms to prevent the firing of shots into the air.

To a large extent then, it is each man for himself in the war zones that many cities and towns are turned into as the new year begins. Keeping the whole family out of harm's way is the surest way of ensuring that the celebration isn't rudely interrupted by tragedy.

Don't lose your fingers tonight

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

DO you know that of all the 365 days of the year, tonight is the night that you have the biggest chance of having a limb amputated—no, not like Commander Robot's leg—but at least one or more fingers or toes? Here's how it usually happens:

If you are one of those foolish persons who would like to greet the New Year with a big bang, you would be lighting and exploding firecrackers—plenty of them because you like to show off to your neighbors. By the law of averages, the more firecrackers you light the bigger the chance one of them will explode in your hand. Either the fuse is too short or you don't throw it away fast enough—maybe you have been drinking with friends and your reflexes have been slowed or you got confused by it—a firecracker explodes in your hand because you like them big and noisy.

You are taken to a hospital where you find bedlam in the emergency room. So many other foolish people have also blasted their own limbs. On any ordinary day, the doctors have the luxury of time to painstakingly sew your fingers together again. But not tonight.

Because of so many patients, all in pain and needing immediate medical attention, they don't have the luxury of time tonight. Some of the patients may be in danger of dying, for they include those who have been hit by stray bullets, stabbed, or victims of fire. Even the interns will all be on duty tonight, still there would not be enough of them to attend to all the patients immediately. So some of you foolish people will have to wait in pain.

The longer a wound goes untreated, the bigger the chance of an infection, especially with firecracker wounds. An infection can sometimes become gangrenous which puts the life of the victim in danger, as what happened to Commander Robot.

Sewing together a badly blasted limb requires long painstaking work by expert surgeons. Tiny nerves, blood vessels, tendons and muscles have to be slowly sewn together. Several surgeons, nurses and their assistants need several hours to put a limb together again. But with so many patients crying in pain and needing medical attention, the few overworked and tired expert surgeons available (they're always in short supply in all hospitals) don't have the time to stay too long on any patient. So they are forced to amputate badly blasted limbs that on any other day or night they could probably save.

So the moral of this piece is this: If you're going to have a hand blasted, don't do it tonight. Do it some other day if you want to keep your fingers.

* * *

Another thing you mustn't do tonight is fire your gun. Maybe you want to show off or scare your neighbors with your gun and tonight is a good excuse to show it. Take my advice: Don't.

In the first place, your neighbors won't be impressed at all. They would be angry instead and may even report you to the police for illegally firing your gun. In the second place, bullets are expensive. If you want to make noise to send away the old year and greet the new one, toot your car horn or bang on pots and pans.

But worst of all, the bullets that you fire into the air may hit somebody when they fall to earth. They may even hit a member of your own family. The penalty for homicide through reckless imprudence is 12 to 20 years in prison. That's what you'll get for trying to show off with your gun.

You think they won't be able to connect you to a stray bullet that hits a person? Yes, they can. They can compute the trajectory of your bullet so that they would be able to tell where it fell. And ballistic tests can match the bullet to your gun through their grooves. They've already done that. Some soldiers and policemen are now serving time in prison for firing their guns into the air on New Year's Eve and the stray bullets hit somebody.

So don't take a chance. Keep your gun in the closet tonight. Think of the innocent person you may kill because you are a showoff.

* * *

The new chief of the Land Transportation and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) should be commended for rejecting the fare hikes being asked by the bus and jeepney operators and drivers. They have been asking fare hikes at the slightest excuse and the old LTFRB was too accommodating.

In fact, I think they are already overcharging their passengers. If they are not, many buses would have ceased operations because of losses. The buses lined bumper-to-bumper on Edsa are all only partially filled. They should be losing a lot of business. Yet they continue to operate. So they must be overcharging their passengers.

The LTFRB should reduce the number of buses plying the Edsa route. Metro Manila has too many of them, clogging traffic, while many provinces have none. Many of them are colorum buses, anyway. Reduce the number of Metro buses and each one of them would earn more. Not only would they have more passengers but they would also be able to have more trips instead of crawling for long hours in the congested streets. Send the excess buses to the provinces where they are urgently needed.

The elevated Metrorail was supposed to reduce the number of buses on the streets below. So why are there more buses now? Because they are still making money. And they're making money because they are charging more than what is fair.

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: Candidates are now busy preparing their campaign songs. President Macapagal-Arroyo is adopting the song "The Impossible Dream" from the musical "Man of La Mancha." It begins like this:

"To dream the impossible dream,
"To fight the unbeatable Poe...."

Paradise lost

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

CHRISTMAS is a fascinating season in this country in many respects. The most patent of those respects is that it is the longest Christmas season anywhere on this planet. I don't know of any other country that plays Christmas songs three months before Christmas Day, or sometimes even earlier. I don't know of any other country that grinds to a halt on Dec. 1: It's all you can do to get anything done on this month, or at least anything serious. We are a people who like to party, and nothing offers a bigger party than Christmas.

Less obviously, the Christmas season in this country really has two parts, which offer a study in contrasts. The first part is Christmas and the second is New Year. Both have their tones, themes and ways of being celebrated.

One way to look at it is that Christmas is the spiritual part while New Year is the secular part. Yet another way to look at it is that Christmas is the part where we become children, and New Year is the part we rush back to being adults. And still another way to look at is that Christmas is rediscovering Eden and New Year is losing it all over again, after having bitten the apple. The transition happens within the space of a week.

Spiritual of course is a relative term. Christmas in this country is the spiritual part only in the way that we Filipinos express spirituality. It is the not the spirituality of silence, or contemplativeness, or aloneness. There is nothing desolate or brooding about it. It is the spirituality of celebration, and gaiety, and togetherness. There is much that is colorful and festive about it. That was what Edsa was about too, a mass of incongruities foreign observers were at pains to grasp, how oppression could co-exist with laughter, how prayer could co-exist with fiesta, how people could turn an act of ousting a tyrant into a party. Inside looking out, there was nothing incongruous about it. That is just the way we do things.

The difference between our sense of Christmas and that of the West we'll probably best see in the difference between the songs "Silent Night, Holy Night" and "Ang Pasko Ay Sumapit." The first captures the mood of the world during Christmas, the second does our own. The first is quiet and brittle, the second is loud and brash. The first conjures the image of snow and lanterns winking in the hazy distance, the second a brass band marching into town, horns blaring and xylophones tinkling, kids and dogs in tow. Maybe it is the difference between snow and tropical weather—climes have been known to affect moods—but this is not a country that is likely to produce high incidences of suicide on Christmas or New Year's Eve.

Yet for all that, there is much that is spiritual there. And not only in the sense of religiousness, though Simbang Gabi abundantly provides it—and even then Simbang Gabi isn't just Mass at early dawn, it is also *puto bumbong* and courtship. It is the time of year our thoughts turn to family, particularly kids, and friends, particularly those we lost along the way. It is the time of year we get to thinking about how our lives have turned, what roads we took or did not take. There is introspection too, amid the gaiety and the gaudy laughter. It is the time we rediscover the joy and wonder of being a child again, of being amazed by the magic of the world around us.

That disappears almost as soon as it comes after Christmas Day. It starts appropriately enough with a hangover the next day, exacerbated by the sporadic bursts of firecrackers, the ferocious kind that make a loud bang and that startles you because you do not particularly expect it. The Christmas songs stop abruptly, except for those who try resolutely and vainly to cling to Christmas—my neighbor is one such glorious recidivist, the morning after Christmas, he was still playing Ray Conniff, in heroic defiance of the march of time—to be replaced by the strains of "Otso-Otso." It is reality barging in.

The differences are not always subtle. During Christmas people give gifts, painstakingly wrapped up in Christmas paper (ripped off in seconds by the receiver), which are gathered ritualistically around the Christmas tree, for those who still have them, or on the living room table for those who don't. During New Year, people give cash, not always painstakingly slipped into envelopes, often directly from wallets into waiting palms. The waiting palms do not always belong to loved ones, they belong as well to garbage collectors, neighborhood sweeps, security guards, and so on, who may or may not be obsequious, but who often use the greeting, "Happy New Year," the way Ali Baba used the password, "Open Sesame."

During Christmas, families partake of the Noche Buena at home, with or without the fortification of the spirits. During New Year, families hie off to better restaurants in ritual divestment of newfound wealth. During Christmas, people come home to reunite with family, during New Year, families flee to Sagada and Boracay. During Christmas, time stops, people finding themselves in the womb of the earth, neither mouse nor leaf stirring. During New Year, time comes storming back, newspapers tell of the year that was and soothsayers foretell of the year that will be. During Christmas, the soul falls into stillness, the better to be filled with tongues of fire. During New Year the body ignites the world with light and the din of firecrackers, the better to scare away the demons or not hear the roar of one's own fears, whichever comes first, or more terrifyingly.

I don't know that the transition from Christmas to New Year is really growing up, becoming adults again, of facing up to reality once more, Sometimes, it just feels like losing paradise.

Dire thoughts

COMMENTARY

Leandro V. Coronel

FILIPINOS seem to be working mighty hard to ensure that we fail as a nation. We're not a people ready to be one nation, a united country, a robust and vibrant society. Rather, we are a divided people, bent on self-destruction.

We're a country redundantly blessed with natural wealth and resources and an intelligent people. But we've done a great job wasting these assets. We haven't learned how to harness such national and natural wealth to produce a progressive nation, a society that bands together for the common good, a country with a purpose, a people who are proud to have a sense of oneness and will fiercely defend their ranks against the corrosive ooze of infighting and divisiveness.

We've wasted our God-given blessings as if their supply is inexhaustible. Actually, we're fast running out of stock. We've ransacked our national wealth with impunity. We've defied and defiled Nature by raping what she's endowed us. We fish our seas and rivers empty; we've rendered our farmlands infertile and barren; we've slashed and burned our forests bald, inflicting on ourselves tragedies like the Leyte landslides.

We're turning ourselves into cretins, unable to express ourselves in the simplest terms. We boast that we speak English, disdainful of our Asian neighbors who cling stubbornly to their native tongues. But is the English we speak really English?

We claim we are an educated people. Yet the number of uneducated educated Filipinos is staggering. We like to brag that we're better than the other Asians, even the Americans. But, if that is true, why are they more progressive than we?

We're saddled with a feudal society. But we think our feudalism is only rural. The truth is feudalism in the Philippines is practiced not only by rural landlords, local capitalists and politicians, although their depredations are the more vividly manifest. But in even more lethal, if subtler, ways, urban feudalism has a vise-like stranglehold on society.

The oligarchs, the bankers, the industrialists, the media moguls, the oil cartels, the big investors, the giant retailer chains, the gambling lords, the crime lords, and even the Church leaders: they are our feudalistic masters. They dictate our lives, our destinies. Do you see anyone around who wants to really break up this monopoly of control by this tiny cabal of powerbrokers? We have in fact indulged them as they pig out in the national trough.

What makes all this possible is that we Filipinos are corrupt, or at least corruptible. Those who've charted this nation's course have been training Filipinos to become corrupt. It hasn't been a hard job for them, we've been cooperative students. It's the corruption, petty and massive, that's the main cause of this country's ruin.

Being corrupt, we're like cannibals. We devour ourselves, gobbling up each other until we're spent and useless. We destroy each other, because being corrupt, we're insatiable, we crave and crave. We're greedy. We believe, as Gordon Gekko, that "greed is OK."

Our feudal lords and our politicians, who are the puppets of the former, are prime-cut cannibals. Before there was Pacman, there were our leaders. Many of them are greedy for material riches. Many others are greedy for power. All of them are simply greedy. And they're eating up everything in sight.

None of the above is revelatory, it is known by us all. What it is is background for what's in store for the nation. It is the prelude to certain ruin. In brief, it explains why we're doomed to fail.

Some will contest the dire thesis of this commentary, its harshness. Too pessimistic, they'll say, all is not lost, there is hope.

Of course there is always hope. But only if there is change, massive change. But is that change possible? It is possible. But is it likely? You supply the answer.

And so, we're at another crossroads. The next five months will be crucial to the nation's future. The elections in May will decide, rather dictate, the path we will take. Will we take the appropriate turn, choose the right road? It's time for us to decide, individually and collectively. The time is now to contemplate our fate. Not next May, but at this year-end that begins another cycle of renewal.

The status quo doesn't make our choices easy. We have a President who lies, or at least one who doesn't keep her word. It's not uncommon these days to hear people call her unprincipled. Worse, shameless.

We have politicians who have been corrupted by the system as to choose expedience over principle. They are those who are foisting upon us a grossly unprepared and undereducated show-biz icon to be our next leader. One such politician has taken a deep descent from able barrister to respected university president to decent parliamentarian to a common pol capable of anything just to get what he wants.

The rest don't offer anything much better.

So look at the scenario again. Can the Philippines as a nation, the Filipinos as a people, be saved? Or are we truly doomed?

Leandro V. Coronel, formerly a US-based writer and spokesperson of the World Bank, is currently a freelance writer in Manila.

Overnight at Sonya's

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SEARCHING for a brief break from the stresses of the holidays before hunkering down to work in the new year? How about Tagaytay?

Over the last weekend, my husband, daughter and I went on such a break, an overnight stay at Sonya's Country Cottage Bed and Breakfast, the latest addition to Sonya's Garden, a complex made up of a restaurant, country store, vegetable and herb greenhouses, and now lodgings that Sonya Garcia has carved out of her retirement home in Alfonso, Cavite.

Seeking quiet and retreat in the cool environs of Tagaytay, Sonya built a small cottage with an outdoor dining area and surrounded the small buildings with an English garden, a profuse but disciplined display of both wild and cultivated plants. For income, she planted and sold rare vegetables and salad greens. Then, putting her flair for vegetarian cooking to good use, she began inviting friends over for simple meals consisting of a salad with her signature dressing, warm homemade bread with tasty spreads, pasta with two kinds of dressing (tomato pesto and chicken in white sauce), and sweetened camote or banana, all washed down with dalandan juice and tarragon tea.

Soon, word of this unique dining place spread, and strangers began calling up and making reservations for their small parties. Years later, the small cottage has given way to a complex of dining pavilions, including a large "conservatory" flanked by a garden of herbs and flowers. Strangers go out of their way just to sightsee and end up enthralled, lost amid Sonya's bushes and blooms, lolling uninvited on the beds and benches located strategically in hidden corners.

"For a place that wasn't meant to create profit, we have done extremely well," Sonya says today. "I'm so surprised that people keep coming. My menu hasn't changed at all, but so many patrons keep returning." To properly enjoy the place one needs to imbibe the experience in its entirety.

* * *

AND now Sonya has given loyal patrons a chance to absorb the ambience even longer.

While showing off her conservatory last year, Sonya pointed to a lot down a slope from her home where construction was going on. "I'm opening a bed and breakfast," she proudly broke the news and at once, the thought of waking up in the morning mist, surrounded by Sonya's garden, beguiled and beckoned.

Opened earlier this year, Sonya's Country Cottages Bed and Breakfast consists of two houses modeled roughly on the *bahay na bato*. Viewed from the gate, the larger house on the left has an enclosed living room and kitchen and rooms for up to 13 people, each room equipped with its own bathroom. On the rightmost corner is the smaller cottage with a tiny kitchen, bathroom and a dining area open on three sides in the ground floor. The second floor consists of a small foyer and one large room that holds three double beds, one of which is topped by a charming canopy of mosquito netting. "I am so sleeping on this bed!" exclaimed my daughter who has long hankered for a canopied four-poster bed of her own.

Between the two houses is a structure under construction, a place for meetings and conferences. A few steps down is a row of massage rooms and farther on, two small one-room cottages, one on top of the other, for couples.

* * *

THIS is just the rough lay of the land. For what makes a stay in Sonya's bed and breakfast a special experience are the little touches: crisp white cotton linens—bedcovers, bed linens, napkins and even the small hand towels; the furniture and accessories, an eclectic mix of wooden antiques and shabby chic treasures; the sprays of lavender tied to door knobs with satin ribbons; and flowers, flowers everywhere, from the blooms of white fragrant pasquitas, bright blue morning glory and pink blossoms that smell of butter that line the garden path, to the cut flowers on small vases, laid on plates, and even adorning our pillows.

Over dinner in our assigned cottage, we were serenaded by two old men from the surrounding community, a gentle *harana* of a single guitar and old men's wavering voices singing of love lost in the mournful tunes of the traditional *kundiman*.

The next morning, we were summoned for breakfast in a nook below a shady tree, our table overhung with netting to diffuse the sunlight. Porcelain plates and delicate cups of different patterns were laid on our white linen tablecloth, as we feasted on fried rice, fried bangus, adobo, omelettes and salsa of tomatoes, mangoes and mint. We washed down this feast with hot chocolate and dalandan juice, after which an attendant brought in a platter of mangoes and melons, each bright yellow slice adorned with a sprig of mint and a bright pink blossom, a sight so charming the hubby just had to take a photo of it.

* * *

AN OVERNIGHT stay at Sonya's does not come cheap, but it does come with dinner and breakfast and the priceless Tagaytay weather and the staff's devoted attention. Guests are encouraged to check in as early as 2 p.m. of the first day, though we didn't drive into the road leading to Sonya's till past eight that night. Our loss.

A stay at Sonya's though, also allows one a glimpse of the "new" bourgeoning Tagaytay, with a number of new places opening along the Ridge and farther down in villages and subdivisions. We stopped for coffee and tea at Starbucks, which shares a site overlooking the lake with a number of other establishments like Pancake House and Hen Lin. For lunch, we decided to try Antonio's All-Day Breakfast, in a house that I had long admired and was now converted into a gleaming white restaurant. We had come at nearly 2 p.m. expecting the lunch crowd to have thinned by then, but found a long queue of patrons. Still, our meal was worth the wait. And Sonya's—and Tagaytay—well worth the drive.

Editorials at the year-end

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

AS a columnist writing on Philippine history, I am always hard-pressed for something fresh on: June 12 Independence Day, Nov. 30 Andres Bonifacio Day and Dec. 30 Rizal Day. Then there are columns that have to fit certain times like Easter, Christmas, New Year both Western and Chinese. To complicate things further we have recently been granted new holidays, like the end of Ramadan, which is a first step in getting the Christian majority to integrate or at the very least appreciate the faith and cultures of Filipinos in the minority. While columnists have more liberty to choose topics for these holidays, editorial writers do not.

During New Year's Day, for example, editorials in some papers just skim and pinch from the standard new year greetings issued by the Pope, the President, the Archbishop of Manila, the mayor of Manila, etc. It wouldn't be surprising if some editorials are completely lifted from those published previously.

For this column we push back the clock to 1890. Going through all the January issues of the propaganda paper La Solidaridad, we noticed that only three years: 1890, 1891 and 1894 had some New Year content. 1890 had an editorial while 1891 and 1894 carried accounts of a banquet held in Madrid on New Year's Eve 1890 and 1893. Reading the 1890 editorial was very instructive. Spanish is more florid than English and the prose was not to my liking but the content with a few changes could very well apply to us facing the dawn of 2004. They opened as we would today by stating:

"Our spirit is beset by a vague mixture of optimism and pessimism at the start of this New Year."

Each New Year is like a door. We know what we are leaving behind but don't know what lies ahead behind the door. This may explain why many people go through the ritual of making resolutions that are meant to be broken over the year. The virtue must be in the exercise, in reflecting on what we did wrong in the past year to attempt reform in the coming one. La Solidaridad proceeded on a high note:

"The campaign which La Solidaridad is undertaking against the forces of obscurantism and reaction and which the paper is proud of; the attainment of practically all the reforms listed in the questionnaire of the Asociacion Hispano-Filipina; the brilliant support that the principal newspapers of this city [Madrid] and Barcelona have given to the [cause of] liberal reforms for the Philippines; and the entry of this paper with greater vigor and greater resources into the second year of its existence gladden many hearts and make us think of happy and fruitful days ahead…

"If extreme love for the country could be considered a crime, we would hope to be criminals in such a magnificent crime. We confess without reservations, the only ideal we have in our aspirations is love for the Philippines and Spain. And so all our enthusiasm is gladly dedicated to the welfare of both." In 1896 Andres Bonifacio would lead the revolution against Spain and show that love of country was for Filipinas alone, not the mother country in far-off Spain, but the love for the land of one's birth or *pag-ibig sa tinubuang lupa*. At the time the enemy was seen to be the Spanish friar, today the same conditions remain but the enemy is something else. They wrote:

"We are now in 1890. Despite the reforms that in the past years had been implanted in the Archipelago, this piece of Spanish land still has not left the condition of moral and material prostration to which it had been condemned and subjected by the friars. We crave much more than what was done…"

The sad part is that what they wished for in 1890 is still the same things we wish for in 2003:

"A radical reform in education will also be a principal objective of our patriotic campaign, especially because we are not unaware of the fact that the rapid advance of a nation depends on the degree of education it offers—a firm and necessary basis of all progress. To relegate the Filipino people to an absolute intellectual abjection can only be convenient to the lovers of obscurantism who are well convinced that pure ignorance of the people is the strongest aid to their enrichment and their power…

"Nature was kind in endowing the Philippines with fertile lands, large rivers, rich mountains, deep forests, different mines, products of all kinds, and safe harbors. With such powerful elements of posterity, we are surprised at the visible backwardness of the Philippines in agriculture, commerce, and industry, a backwardness which also becomes our concern in the program and shall be dealt with extensively in every way related to the first."

Newspaper editorials have to be lofty and inspire people to move. In 1890 La Solidaridad sought a country that would "completely abolish privileges which foster hate and which had never had reason to be in any country where there is justice—the government is incorruptible and the people educated and free."

We read old newspaper editorials for the New Year and sigh. Did we listen to these messages? Have we actually progressed much as a country and a people since 1890? This may be why some people would like to believe that our heroes of the late 19th century were prophetic, that they saw present Philippine problems in their time and sought to answer them. We never seem to learn.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Christmases away from home

COMMENTARY

Natalia M.L.M. Morales

THEY say there is no equal to how Filipinos spend Christmas—all of three months or more, when the "-ber" months set in. That is why many Filipinos overseas look forward to their holidays in the country with their loved ones and friends. The blurb *wala niyan sa States* clearly applies to this season of seasons.

But there are many Filipinos, non-migrants and loyal to the land, who find themselves in circumstances where they are away from the Pinoy holiday air. Nostalgia and strangeness may be felt, resolve to return during the season made. But for a number, who by reason of fiat or liquidity, Christmas away from home can be a sobering, learning experience. One has just to make the most of it, prove that the message of Christmas—peace and unity—can rise above the occasion and the celebration to be a real spiritual and selfless exercise.

I spent roughly 10 Christmases away from the country. The first time was in the "land of milk and honey" in the United States at the time that the country was at the height of its affluence and involvement in the Vietnam War. As a high school exchange student then under the American Field Service (AFS) International Exchange, I spent my school year as a high school senior student matched with a Catholic family in Lincoln, Nebraska—Fredric and Irene Hamilton and their four children. My host dad worked with the General Telephone Directory. I see that it was connected with the public service work of my real father, Obdulio Mièeque, a lawyer-civil servant who was regional director at the Bureau of Posts (now Philippine Postal Corp.). My host mom, Irene, was a dutiful housewife who had a part-time job with the Sun Newspapers in Lincoln. She was more home-bound than my real mother, Lourdes Manalon, who all her life was a schoolteacher in the City Schools of Manila, retiring as a principal in the elementary school. The pang of nostalgia was assuaged in my first American Christmas when I found my stockings in the living room just as full as my host siblings'. I got gifts that presaged a high-tech world—transistor radio, musical toys, stuffed animals. I missed however the endless stream of visitors my Filipino family had for days, the "*mano po* Ninang" when I commuted to my Ninang Rosie's house in Cubao for blessings and the traditional *pamasko*. In Lincoln, I don't recall seeing a White Christmas, but a dry, cold one (earlier in November, it was a white Thanksgiving for me in a farm in McCook, Nebraska where the parents of Dean and Irene lived). There was no *Simbang Gabi*, no Noche Buena. But the Christmas carols of the Church choir, donned with robes, filled the air. The Hamilton's dining table was full of goodies the whole Christmas Day. Anyone in the family can run and get the nuts, chocolates, cakes, soda. I vaguely recall an equally homesick cousin, who was trying to work as a nurse in Oklahoma, phoning me a day of two after Christmas. She expressed how lonely she was spending her first Christmas away from home. I felt lucky that the loneliness this beautiful time of the year away from home was weakened by my being with a wholesome host family in the middle of the great, dry and cold prairie of Nebraska.

The next Christmas spent overseas was when I had my own family already. With our oldest daughter Novette Regina, I joined my husband Rafael in 1977 in Ann Arbor, Michigan where he was a DeWitt Fellow at the University of Michigan Law School. It was one of the happiest Christmases I spent early in my marriage. Arriving just a few days before Christmas, we felt this special season for families in a number of ways. Years after I was an exchange student, my AFS dad, Dean Hamilton met me and my one-year-old daughter at O'Hare Airport in Chicago before we took the plane for Detroit. Already retired, Dean and Irene moved to Illinois to be near their children, who now lived and worked in that state. It was incredible that the ties formed as a high school exchange student remained strong as ever even after all the years. It was a year of family reunions—with my adoptive hosts in the youth exchange and my real siblings—Dong and Chicoy with their own families in Toronto, Canada. The comfort and convenience of travel made the seven-hour bus trip from Detroit to Toronto seem like a big excursion. Our daughter got to meet her Toronto-based cousins and her robust Uncle Chicoy who played Santa Claus whose thunderous voice and laughter scared her newly-arrived niece at that time.

I was lucky that although I spent Christmas away from the country, Christmas was still "home" for me. The center of Christmas, which is the family, has never been lost. In the mid-'80s, my family joined me as I spent three years as a Monbusho fellow in Japan. Not being a Christian country, Japan does not make a holiday of Christmas. But in Tokyo and major cities like Osaka, the Christmas spirit is there in the western dècors of the stores, the Christmas music that fills its western-style *kissaten* (coffee shops), and the few Catholic churches where Japanese Catholics pray and chant seriously and solemnly—somewhat differently from the fiesta air of Filipino Catholic liturgy. But Christmas has a special meaning for the Japanese, which is related to their nationhood. The symbol of Christmas for the Japanese is the white square box that contains the fancy Christmas cake. According to a news feature, the practice of the ubiquitous Christmas cake in that country started in 1954, when the Japanese joyfully learned that their GNP had been restored finally to its pre-war level. It was such happy news that made the Japanese buy cakes to celebrate the occasion. Thus, it could be said that Japanese economic miracle begun in the Christmas of '54.

But nothing can beat a humorous Christmas holiday spent by my family in 1998, the Philippine Centennial Year, in Rosarito, Mexico. A Mexican diplomat friend in Manila suggested the place as it was close to the United States and was the locale for the movie "Titanic." That year, the law office of my husband held their year-end meeting in Los Angeles, California. But feeling patriotic and historic, we thought we could spend Christmas in a culture similar to the Philippines. But for all the effort, we missed the Mexican element of celebrating Christmas in Rosarito. The reason was the Christmas Mass we went to was sponsored by American retirees who had moved to this beach town. It was an American Christmas, from the language to the music!

Truly, Christmas is not in the place and people but in the hearts of men. Christmas is hope, peace and goodwill. But who would like to miss Christmas in the Philippines?

Natalia M.L.M. Morales is professor of Political Science and International Studies at the University of the Philippines, Diliman. Feedback at nataliam91@hotmail.com

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Not the best reference for president in 2004

LETTERS PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MAYBE it's discrimination among Filipinos that we believe that the Department of Health can be best run only by an MD, the Department of Public Works and Highways by an engineer, and the National Economic and Development Authority by an economist, etc.

That's why the "educated" among us couldn't accept a school dropout to be a candidate for president. Under present-day criteria for leadership, Andres Bonifacio wouldn't qualify to be the leader of the Katipunan.

If the solution to our problems is to elect a president with full command of information and resources needed for the office, we should elect Superman. No matter how good a person is, he could not possibly be endowed with knowledge, wisdom and experience that go into the mix of making correct decisions always.

In the end, it's character, divine guidance and the kind of moral compass used that matter in decision-making.

More than enough commentaries have been made about Fernando Poe Jr. to arrive at an objective conclusion. From all that has been said and written, this conclusion can be made—that his skills and competence about governance are in question but his morality and humanity are not.

As Peggy Noonan wrote in her book about Ronald Reagan, "Character Above All,": "In a president, character is everything. A president doesn't have to be brilliant... He doesn't have to be clever..."

Noonan further said that clever and pragmatic people can be hired and policy works can be brought in. But they need a leader of good character setting the example of courage and decency like Reagan to achieve certain objectives such as bringing about the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Bill Clinton, on the other hand, with the best education at his command, couldn't bring himself to get rid of Osama bin Laden because his flawed character diverted his attention to unimportant priorities. For when the full account of Clinton's presidency is finally written, his flawed character was the big handicap in losing his chance to be a great president.

That's why high education is not the best reference for someone to be elected president.

—FRANK WENCESLAO,
92 Mindanao Ave., QC

High-flying grafters still untouched

A SIGNIFICANT achievement of the military this month was the capture of the Abu Sayyaff's Commander Robot. There are conflicting versions about how he was captured. But the important fact is he is now in the hands of the law and is not likely to carry on inflicting suffering upon the people of Mindanao and Sulu. That he has been amputated is some assurance that he is not likely to escape from detention as has happened with other criminals in the custody of the police.

Credited for the capture of Robot are intelligence and operative units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and civilian informers who were paid a bounty for the information they provided that led to the capture. P5 million was paid in the case of Robot. The police have also been successful in the apprehension of kidnappers and illegal drug dealers and shabu laboratory operators in recent days, although not much has been heard recently about illegal gambling. In any case, the Macapagal administration is demonstrating will and determination in stopping these crimes and we are seeing commendable success, proving that where the presidency is determined, some significant achievement worthy of public acclaim may be expected.

In the area of crimes in the bureaucracy and high government office, President Macapagal-Arroyo has been sorely deficient. Where she has been ready to pour government resources and bounty money to get the likes of Al Ghozi and Robot, scant encouragement and support are extended to the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission, the Department of Justice and the Ombudsman to go after the high-flying grafters in the government payroll. Reward incentives are offered to informers for the capture of the criminals in the hills and the dark alleys; none are offered for the identification and prosecution of the criminals who frequent the lobbies of high government offices and five-star hotel lounges who have been responsible for heists in the PIA-Amari, Piatco, Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, IPP, Impsa, Naia 3 and other similar deals. These criminals inflict suffering upon the nation in more insidious ways than the open lawlessness the President is apparently occupied with.

Perhaps the President should allocate more funds to the prosecution arm of the government and offer reward to lawyer groups and NGOs which can identify and lead in the prosecution of these gentle-mannered criminals who grace the elite social circles. She might also appear in photo ops with some erring associates and kin in handcuffs to emphasize her revulsion for criminals of all shades.

—E.P. DAKANAY JR.,
43 Baltazar St.,
Philamlife Village, Pamplona,
Las Piñas City

Old EC claim unacted on

ON JAN. 2, 1993, my brother-in-law, Vicente T. Fuentespina, a member of the Social Security System with SSS No. 07-1183638-5, was murdered by a knife-wielding assailant who happened to be his passenger in a taxi driven by him.

Thereafter, my sister, his wife, and their four minor children were awarded the SSS survivorship pensions.

Since her husband died due to a job-related accident, my sister also filed her and her children's claim for employee compensation (EC) benefits. However, for reasons only SSS Bacolod knew, it prolonged the acceptance of their EC claim. This dragged on until Sept. 9, 1994.

Because since then nothing definite came of their claim, aggravated by the fact that my sister died in the first half of the year 2001, I decided to follow up her claim with the assistance of a lawyer. This prompted SSS Bacolod to reactivate the claim folder from its dormant files on Oct. 1, 2001. Incidentally, on Dec. 8. 2001, the employer of my late brother-in-law, also died.

After a flurry of communication between the Civil Service Commission, the SSS and me, SSS Quezon City finally came up with a casual and unclear pronouncement that the claim was "for further verification."

Be that as it may, I would like to respectfully call on the Employees Compensation Commission (ECC) to remind its administering agency, the SSS, to be fair, humane and efficient in dealing with EC claimants. The completely orphaned children of the deceased couple are now asking, if the overextended (nine years) non-resolution of their mother's EC claim is not a form of social injustice. Well, what is it?

—MANUEL V. YANSON,
Purok Yanson, Eroreco,
6100 Bacolod City

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Charter change only after 2004 elections

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia's announcement for a "last push" for a constituent assembly in January 2004 flies in the face of political reality. It does not do justice to the cause of constitutional reform nor to the interests of the Filipino people. Constitutional reform must be de-linked from partisan politics for it to be accepted by the people and to ensure that only national interests are considered. A Congress acting as a constituent assembly in the midst of the presidential and congressional elections is inviting trouble—big political trouble. You do not change the rules of the game during the game itself!

It is not true that only 14 senators oppose a constituent assembly. Civil society participants in both Edsa II and Edsa III are firmly against it—to the extent that they would rather wait for the next Congress to call for a constitutional convention than flirt with a constitutional assembly now. The contemplated changes, such as a shift to a parliamentary system, are simply too fundamental to leave it with legislators who are elected by the people to primarily make laws.

I beseech De Venecia to let the assembly proposal lie peacefully in its grave. Let us unite for constitutional reform through a constitutional convention after the May 2004 elections.

—RAMON CASIPLE,
executive director,
Institute for Political
and Electoral Reform (IPER),
moncasiple@fastmail.fm

PNP-media row over 'jueteng' in Vizcaya

THIS is about the news item last Nov. 3, 2003 titled, "Jueteng alive but task force dead" by Christian Esguerra and Melvin Gascon.

Please be informed that we strongly deny the accusation and exposé of Esguerra and Gascon. The issues raised by the two are fabrications designed to malign the image, integrity and reputation of the Philippine National Police.

The province of Nueva Vizcaya (not Nueva Ecija as the subtitle said) has been declared a *jueteng*-free province since 2000 and this is true even now as town mayors attest.

Gascon, the president of the Nueva Vizcaya Press Club, is a known media man in the province and a friend of the PNP. To maintain the good relationship between the PNP and the media, I have given small favors like a cellular phone, prepaid cards, apartment rentals and other small things of this nature to Gascon but due to limited resources, these favors were not sustained. Since then, he has been attacking the PNP using the media in fabricated stories that maligned, harassed and worried the provincial leadership headed by Gov. Rodolfo Agbayani and Bishop Ramon Villena who were instrumental in making the province *jueteng*-free.

In the affidavit of Chief Insp. Teodoro Santos, chief of police of Bayombong, he stated that some time in November 2002, when he was still the provincial intelligence officer, a certain Boy Mayor from Quezon Province approached him and asked him if they can revive *jueteng* in Nueva Vizacaya, but he warned Mayor this would be difficult as the religious sector and local government units are very vocal and actively against it. But when he mentioned the role of the media in the campaign against illegal gambling, Mayor merely laughed and said that there will be no problem with the media because they had already sat down with Gascon at Sports City, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, and given him a cellular phone and P5,000 cash to ensure that the media would be amenable to the revival of *jueteng* in the province.

Santos further stated that a certain Alex Mauricio, a remnant of the Tuzon Group, a previous operator of *jueteng* in the province, attempted to introduce "*lotteng*," an illegal numbers game derived from the daily draws of lotto. He disclosed that Gascon was receiving money and cellular cards weekly from him. And that he still frequently demanded for his weekly envelope even after the operation of *lotteng* was stopped.

Gascon is using his profession as a front in his illegal activities involving *jueteng* and *lotteng* in Nueva Vizcaya. He used blackmail with the lies he fabricated when his demands were turned down.

—JESUS S. MANUBAY, DSC,
police senior superintendent,
Nueva Vizcaya Police
Provincial Office,
Camp Dumlao, Bayombong,
Nueva Vizcaya

I vehemently deny the accusations against me made by Senior Supt. Jesus Manubay, Chief Insp. Teodoro Santos, Chief Insp. James Afalla and a certain Alex Mauricio. Clearly, from all angles, these allegations were meant to harass me, humiliate me before the public and crush my credibility as a media practitioner, especially in my crusade against "jueteng."

Manubay's accusation that I demanded and received from him "small favors" is a blatant lie.

It is absolutely ridiculous that "some time in November 2002," I received a cellular phone and P5,000 in cash to give the "assurance that the media (in Nueva Vizcaya) were amenable in (sic) the resurgence of 'jueteng' in the province." This is a lie because I became president of the Nueva Vizcaya Press Club only in January 2003. I do not know, never met and never spoke to Mauricio or anybody by the name of Boy Mayor, who was being mentioned as the source of the rumor being peddled by Manubay and his group.

I never engaged in any illegal activity, or used my profession to blackmail anybody. What I had been doing was a mere performance of my role as a member of the media.

—MELVIN C. GASCON,
correspondent,
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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Violence may result in unilateral Israeli disengagement

NEWS ANALYSIS

Josef Federman

JERUSALEM—Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's vision of an imposed separation from the Palestinians drew a little closer with the latest spike in Mideast violence.

The Thursday suicide bombing that killed four Israelis near Tel Aviv underscored the Palestinian Authority's continuing refusal to challenge militant groups, as required by the US-backed "road map" peace plan, and the failure of its efforts to coax a no-violence pledge from them.

An Israeli missile strike minutes earlier in Gaza, which killed three Islamic Jihad militants and two civilians, reflected Israel's determination to keep attacking the militants even if, as critics say, it provokes more violence. Israel's own violations of the road map, namely its failure to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank, only adds to the tensions.

The two attacks ended a two-month lull and threatened ongoing efforts to reach a truce after three years of fighting.

As hopes for establishing calm dissipate, it appears increasingly likely that Sharon will forsake the possibility of future peace talks for a unilateral disengagement from parts of the West Bank and Gaza.

This week, he is expected to appoint an official to oversee the disengagement plan he announced earlier this month, Channel Two television reported.

Opinions are varied on what caused the lull: Some say the militants were holding back to give Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia a chance to forge a cease-fire with Israel; Israeli officials say security agencies have foiled many attempted attacks.

Although Israeli officials have publicly dismissed the truce efforts—noting the road map calls for the militants to disarm—the military has appeared to toe a delicate line.

Security officials said Friday they no longer were targeting Hamas, the group responsible for most of the more than 100 suicide bombings over the past three years, because it appears to have halted attacks inside Israel.

But Hamas on Sunday disputed that assessment, although a spokesperson left the door open to a mutual cease-fire.

Even so, fighting has suddenly escalated.

For more than a week, Israel has carried out an offensive in the West Bank city of Nablus, which it calls a "hotbed" of militant activity. An Israeli operation against weapons-smuggling tunnels in Gaza left nine Palestinians dead Tuesday. Then came Thursday's attacks.

For the past three years, such junctures have tended to spiral into yet more violence.

But Sharon now seems ready to respond on another level as well: The prime minister is threatening to redraw the map of the West Bank in a way Palestinians would not like. He envisions dismantling some Jewish settlements deep inside but also claiming almost half the territory by constructing a massive barrier bringing many large settlements onto the "Israeli" side.

His apparent goals: to improve Israeli security and to minimize both contact with the Palestinians and the amount of land handed to them.

Sharon said earlier this month he would pursue such a "unilateral disengagement" if he concluded the Palestinians were not moving forward on the road map. The new violence seems to be bringing that moment sooner.

"They are losing time, dragging their feet and the situation is not getting any better from their point of view," said Avi Pazner, an adviser to Sharon.

He stressed, however, that Sharon has not set any deadlines.

Qureia has been working hard to persuade militant groups to halt attacks on Israelis. He hopes such a commitment would help restart negotiations on the road map, which envisions an independent Palestinian state by 2005. So far, Qureia's efforts have come up empty.

Even if the militant groups agree to a truce, few in Israel would trust them. There is also a growing feeling in Israel that the Palestinians are not sincerely committed to negotiations.

Instead, the Palestinians believe time is on their side, according to this line of thinking. If Israel continues to hold on to the West Bank and Gaza, Arabs will soon outnumber Jews in areas under Israeli control.

Sharon has stressed that the Palestinians would do far better under a negotiated settlement based on the road map.

But it is very difficult to envision a scenario in which the Palestinians take on the militants in a way that satisfies Israel and meets their road map obligations. AP

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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

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Teachers' bonuses to cost ₱2.5B

BACOLOD CITY—Education Undersecretary Jose Miguel Luz yesterday announced that P2.5 billion has been allocated for the extra bonuses of the 500,000 public schoolteachers of the country.

The teachers should be receiving an extra bonus of P5,000 each, and not P3,500 as some have been led to believe, said Luz, who was in Bacolod City visiting his family for the New Year celebration.

The funds had been moved by the Department of Education (DepEd) central office to the education department's regional offices on Dec. 22 and should have been received by the teachers yesterday, he said.

"If they receive less than P5,000 or do not get their money the teachers should file complaints before the DepEd text hotline," Luz said.

He said any teacher who has a reason to complain about the extra bonus should provide his or her name and station number so that the DepEd central office would know exactly where he or she is located.

Luz said the department's text number, 09194560027, is a 24-hour hotline.

"The teachers' money should be released before the New Year, it should not be withheld over the holidays," he said.

Luz said some teachers think they would only get P3,500 because the Department of Budget and Management had announced that the national government was releasing that amount.

However, the DepEd has added funds to the amount to make the extra bonus P5,000 per teacher, he said.

"We had worked out assistance from the national government since the DepEd did not have enough savings to make the cash gift P5,000 and the DBM agreed to come up with the counterpart," Luz said.

At least 12,000 public schoolteachers in Negros Occidental and Bacolod City would benefit from the extra bonus. There are 8,759 elementary and 3,495 high school teachers in Negros Occidental and Bacolod.

Teachers recently joined nationwide protests against the delay in the release of loans and benefits from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS).

The delays were caused by the GSIS' computerization program but the protesters accused top GSIS officials of mismanaging the fund, saying GSIS money was spent for purposes not part of the agency's mandate.

The bonuses come as a bit of good news for the teachers, whose perennial complaint was being overworked and underpaid.

The low pay of teachers in public schools has made the position unattractive, contributing to the shortage of teachers nationwide that complicates the lack of classrooms. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Farmer, pal kill guard in Batangas hostage drama

BATANGAS CITY—A desperate farmer who allegedly lost the money he raised for his comatose son's medical expenses yesterday took hostage and killed a security guard at a Batangas hospital here.

In a two-hour hostage drama, Angelito Dumpay and his companion Jesse Villar, allegedly took hostage hospital security guard Ricardo Velasco, 63, at the Batangas Regional Hospital in Barangay Kumintang Ibaba, this city.

Senior Supt. Rodolfo Magtibay, Batangas police director, said the victim, a resident of Barangay Bolbok here, was on duty at the main entrance of the hospital when the suspects took him hostage at about 2 a.m.

Dumpay, 32, a farmer from Barangay San Luis, Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro, and Villar, also a farmer from Barangay Poblacion, Mamburao, used the guard's service firearm.

From 2:30 a.m. to 4:30 a.m., police negotiators tried to convince the two hostage-takers to free Velasco.

Even Magtibay and city police chief Supt. Juanito Gamboa tried to negotiate, but the two suspects didn't listen.

Police said that at 4:30 a.m., the suspects dragged Velasco to the east wing of the hospital where they allegedly shot him twice in the back and once in the buttock.

When police reached the east wing, they found Velasco dead and no trace of the suspects.

At 8:30 a.m., bystanders spotted the two in front of the Don Ramos Store in Kumintang Ibaba and called police.

The two were in a jeepney bound for Barangay Tabangao when police caught up with them.

Dumpay's eldest son Angelo, 19, has been confined in the hospital since Dec. 27 after he was hit by a car in Mamburao, which left him comatose.

Dumpay said he brought money with him for his son's treatment but the guard would not let them in with their bags.

"When we came back after visiting my son, my bag had been searched. And the money I left in my bag was gone," Dumpay said, adding that the P5,000 stolen from his bag was money he got from selling his two carabaos.

He said when he confronted the guard, the latter even shouted obscenities. *Mei Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ENTERTAINMENT

EV ESPIRITU/PDI PHOTO

A child appears to be amused at monkey puppets a vendor is selling in Burnham Park in Baguio City. The puppets are instant attractions to park promenaders, especially children.

Local execs tell Senate bets: Pay first

OROQUIETA CITY—If communists want politicians to pay for permits to campaign (PTC), local executives in Misamis Occidental want candidates for senator to pay in exchange for support.

Lopez Jaena town Mayor Melquiades Azcuña, president of the League of Municipalities in Misamis Occidental, told reporters that aspirants for the Senate have to pay entrance fees before their names would be included in the slate of national candidates that local leaders will campaign for.

"If they use us, (they have to) pay," Azcuña said, adding that to ensure inclusion in the campaign slate, a candidate for senator must advance financial aid.

He said town mayors came up with this consensus as a way of teaching candidates for senator a lesson or two about word of honor.

Azcuña said local executives have noted that most of those they supported in the past—particularly those from Luzon—have reneged on their vows after clinching Senate seats.

The primary complaint of town executives, he said, usually relate to the dilly-dallying of action on project proposals they submit for funding by the senators' development funds.

Azcuña said many local leaders even defrayed the costs of some senatorial candidates' local campaign in the hope of being given projects from the candidates' development funds.

The local leaders issue the same promises to their constituents only to renege on these because the senatorial candidates reneged on them, too.

But as it turned out, the local leaders end up as losers even if their candidates have won as promises of projects were left unfulfilled.

"We have been unwittingly used in the past, we cannot allow that to happen again," Azcuña said.

Fanning this discontent by the local leaders is the strong perception among them that the current crop of senators is not performing at par with expectations but instead "excelled in grandstanding and not on true service to (sic) the people's interest."

"A similar consensus is also evolving among members of the national executive council of the League of Municipalities in the Philippines," Azcuña said. *Ryan Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Communist rebels vow more attacks vs gov't

ILOILO CITY—Communist rebels on Panay Island warned of "widespread and more frequent" offensives in 2004 as it claimed registering "significant" gains this year.

In an e-mailed press statement marking the 35th founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) on Dec. 26 but released yesterday, the CPP's Panay regional committee claimed "thousands of farmers, workers, women, youth, and from the middle class have joined organizations that support the armed struggle and the New People's Army (NPA)."

Membership

The membership of the rebel group in Panay also grew to more than a thousand and is expected to double "in the near future," according to the statement that quoted rebel leader Concha Araneta.

Araneta belittled the military operations on the island led by the Army's Task Force Panay (TFP). TFP is in charge of internal security operations on Panay Island.

She said the CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), had "frustrated" the intensive operations of government troops in 2003.

Six soldiers including an Army captain and a militiaman were killed in a Feb. 24 ambush in Sibaguan Creek in Barangay Daan Sur in Tapaz, Capiz. *Nestor Burgos Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau*

Landowners barricade tarmac, stop flights

By Nestor Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Flights in the Manila-Antique route were cancelled yesterday after the family of a landowner claiming ownership of a lot occupied by the Antique airport barricaded the airport tarmac.

This was the second time in 10 days that Ruben Collado and his relatives barricaded the tarmac of the Evelio Javier Airport in Barangay Funda-Dalipe in the capital town of San Jose.

Collado has been demanding P7 million from the Air Transportation Office (ATO).

Collado agreed to lift their protest around noon after provincial administrator Manuel Salazar intervened.

But the flight from Manila with 17 booked passengers scheduled to depart Manila at 9 a.m. was canceled before the barricade was lifted. The return flight with 19 passengers scheduled to leave Antique at 12:05 p.m. was also called off, said Gigi Delgado of the Asian Spirit office in Antique.

The passengers transferred to flights to Iloilo or rescheduled their trip today. Asian Spirit, the sole airline operating in the Antique-Manila route, has a single flight daily except on Sunday and Thursday.

ATO officials from Iloilo and Manila will hold a dialogue with the landowners and Antique officials on Jan. 7, said Antique Gov. Salvacion Zaldivar-Perez.

Collado and 20 of his relatives placed two long bamboo poles across the tarmac at around 7 a.m. yesterday. They also erected a billboard declaring the area private property.

Fisherman survives 24-hr ordeal at sea

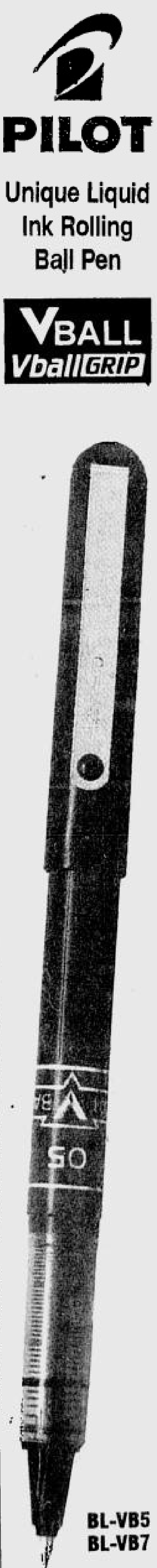
CEBU CITY—A fisherman who had been floating for more than 24 hours in seawaters off Camotes Island in the northern tip of Cebu was rescued by a passenger vessel early Monday.

Nelson Narciso, 26, of Barangay Santiago, Francisco, Camotes Island, was already weak when he was fished out of the sea by the crew members of the MV Super Shuttle Ferry 2 at around 6 a.m. The ferry was on its way to Cebu City from Camiguin province.

Narciso was on a fishing trip at around 7 p.m. Saturday when his outrigger was hit by an unidentified vessel. Narciso survived by holding on to a piece of his destroyed boat.

Narciso had no injuries but he was very weak, a boat passenger said.

Relatives of Narciso living in Barangay Lahug, Cebu City heard about his ordeal over the radio yesterday and fetched him at the port area when the ferry docked at around 10 a.m. Monday. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*



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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Rolando B. Fernandez**

SARS, Harurot and Gloria's break of election promise

By the PDI Northern Luzon Bureau and Central Luzon Desk

THE YEAR 2003 saw a mysterious virus that gripped Asia being transported to Northern Luzon, and a major political announcement from President Macapagal-Arroyo that changed the field in the coming elections.

Disasters did not spare Northern and Central Luzon as a string of typhoons hit various provinces in the North in July.

The pastoral village of Vacante in Alcala, Pangasinan, was thrust into the national health map after one of its residents, Adela Catalon, contracted the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

Catalon, a 46-year-old nursing attendant who worked in Canada, went home on April 5 but died of what health officials said was SARS on April 14.

YEARENDER

Her father, Mauricio, died of SARS-related causes on April 22. He contracted the virus from his daughter, Adela.

Three zones of Barangay Vacante were put in quarantine and isolated for two weeks until May 2. No other people were allowed to enter the village except the medical teams of the Department of Health and some policemen assigned to patrol the area.

Emotions ran high among the residents who had to deal with the fear of having been contaminated with the deadly virus and the discrimination they had to suffer from other people.

The SARS scare also affected local tourism as several flights from Taiwan and China to the Laoag International Airport were stopped in April and May.

In Abra, Adela Dalingay, a Filipino maid who died of SARS in Hong Kong on March 24, was taken home to Manabo town on April 2.

Fears of the spread of SARS through returning overseas Filipino workers also gripped Northern and Central Luzon.

A Filipino worker from Canada who died of SARS symptoms in Angeles City in April alarmed local residents.

In May, the ashes of "CY," a Filipina who died of SARS in Hong Kong, were returned to Pampanga.

In Cabagan, Isabela, at least 20 families were isolated in Barangays Casibarag Norte and Casibarag Sur when a suspected SARS victim arrived from Hong Kong. The patient was later cleared of SARS infection.

Typhoons

Super typhoon "Harurot" killed at least 10 people in Northern and Central Luzon and destroyed more than P1.9 billion worth of crops in July.

The hardest hit province was Isabela, where repair of power and communication transmission lines took more than a month.

Harurot displaced more than 10,000 people in the regions, with flooding reported in many parts of Northern Luzon.

Central Luzon was not spared of floods in 2003. Tropical storm Dodong and typhoon Chedeng in June spawned floods that affected 207,419 people, mostly in Bulacan.

Baguio, Ilocos Sur, Isabela

The year's biggest issue manifested as an economic time bomb in Baguio City.

A DOH spokesman had alerted the local intelligence community that SARS could be transmitted through used clothes.

AUTHORITIES isolate the residents of Barangay Vacante in Alcala, Pangasinan following the death last April of a Filipina nursing aid from Canada. (Right) President Macapagal announces her intention to run for public office in 2004 during the 1st Kapampangan Senior Citizens Convention last October. PDI PHOTOS

That report destabilized the *wag-wag* (bargain house) trade, which the city had promoted as a legitimate Baguio enterprise only a year before.

2003 was a centennial year for the city because it celebrated the construction of Kennon Road, Camp John Hay and the establishment of its title as Summer Capital of the Philippines in 1903.

The year also brought to the city a highly commercialized Baguio Flower Festival, which was trivialized by the government's attempts to bloat its tourist draw.

Conscious about the impact of good business on the forthcoming elections, the city government threw its resources at sponsoring the 18th Philippine Advertising Congress.

In November, Shoemart was added to five shopping malls that operate in downtown Baguio. The opening in November of SM City Baguio shook up the local retail industry, pressured local businesses to review their rent structures and introduced a new level of business competition that the previous malls had not fueled.

But Baguio's biggest contribution to the economic landscape was a Supreme Court ruling to one of the city's more controversial episodes nine years ago.

The High Court addressed a petition filed in 1994 by Baguio environmentalists and activists against former President Fidel Ramos' decision to give tax immunities to all John Hay investors.

But the tribunal's decision removed with one stroke all the tax benefits enjoyed by investors at Camp John Hay, the Poro Point Economic Zone in La Union and the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga.

The repercussions of that decision on a purely Baguio business concern are haunting the country's business leaders.

In November, seven councilors approved a resolution allowing the operation of a casino in the city.

The resolution ignored an accepted principle taken up by local residents after the 1990 earthquake that gambling was no longer welcome in Baguio. The original Baguio casino, housed by the Hyatt Terraces, was destroyed during the quake.

The casino resolution also invalidated an agreement between the city and the Bases Conversion Development Authority, which barred the developer of Camp John Hay from operating a casino there.

Major Baguio churches have taken their gripes to the pulpits by asking residents to vote against the politicians who supported the John Hay casino.

On Dec. 11, eight people were killed after a fire hit a nightclub in downtown Baguio.

In Ilocos Sur, the family of former Board Member Efren Rafanan was ambushed on March 31.

Rafanan, 42, survived but his wife Evelyn, 47; son Raffy Bryan, 16; Rafanan's brother Dennis; and security aide Elgin Ocampo were killed when their Toyota Revo was strafed by armed men in Vigan.

Rafanan blamed his political opponents for the attack.

In Isabela, Rep. Antonio Abaya, 68, died due to brain cancer on Feb. 26.

His fourth congressional post was declared vacant and a special election was held in May 2003. Giorgidi Aggabao was proclaimed winner over Abaya's widow, Asuncion, amid allegations of fraud.

More than 30 people were killed in vehicular accidents in Cagayan and Isabela. On Dec. 13, two Philippine Air Force captains and a chief mechanic were killed when a six-seat commercial airplane crashed in the mountains of Divilacan, Isabela.

GMA breaks promise

President Macapagal-Arroyo withdrew her declaration on Dec. 30, 2002 that she would not run for office in the May 2004 elections. The President announced this before 20,000 mostly elderly citizens of Pampanga, her home province, on Oct. 4.

"I will offer myself as the leader with the experience and vision necessary to change society, to achieve economic development and eliminate poverty," she said.

Terrorism, as an issue, gripped the region hosting two former United States military bases and an increasingly big contingent of American soldiers coming for training with their Filipino counterparts.

In March, militant groups held frequent rallies against the support of Ms Macapagal to the US military action on Iraq.

For the rest of the year, US troops who participated in 20 exercises were ordered confined in war games sites because the terror threat level in the Philippines remained "high."

In May, aviation leaders and airport officials in the 10-member Asean, Japan, Korea and China met in Clark for a SARS summit. They adopted a joint resolution committing to a policy of not denying entry to passengers suspected of being afflicted with the deadly virus.

The police reported scoring well in the fight against kidnap for ransom groups.

In a clash on Nov. 20 in Dinalupihan, Bataan, policemen killed Dr. Roberto Obeles Yap, said to be the country's most notorious kidnapper, and three of his cohorts.

P02 Joselito Esguerra was killed in the firefight and was hailed a hero in the government's fight against kidnap for ransom groups.

Controversies

The President's eldest son, Pampanga Vice Gov. Juan Miguel Arroyo, stirred controversies. These included his alleged affairs with movie starlets, his friends who fronted as his bagmen for government contracts and jueteng, his wild drinking and his big stable of horses.

Arroyo, a movie actor, denied all these and said the opposition made these up to hit his mother, the President.

The smuggling of vannamei, a banned shrimp species, was reported in Pampanga, Bataan and Zambales.

The government continued to make Clark and Subic the region's economic heartland.

At the intercession of the President, courier giant UPS and Aseana Airlines began operating in Clark this year. Subic continued to draw the bulk of Japanese investors.

Reports on the smuggling of vehicles and duty-free goods in Subic and Clark had not ended, though. *Reports from Vincent Cabreza, Tonette Orejas, Leoncio Balbin Jr. and Villamor Visaya Jr.*

In 2004, more C. Luzon investments

SINCE 2004 is an election year and for a presidential contest at that, it is expected that campaign money for machineries, paraphernalia, doleouts, poll-related jobs and, worst, vote-buying are going to flood the economy and trigger inflation.

High election spending has always been the norm since the 1990s, and even a Commission on Elections rule limiting the expenditures of candidates for every voter at only P4 has done nothing to regulate expenditures.

The prospects of increased investments and mobility of goods are in the offing with the full completion of the North Luzon Expressway by December 2004.

The start by middle of next year of three major infrastructure projects—the Subic seaport, the new cargo and passenger terminals at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Toll Road—is going to generate thousands of construction jobs as proponents have planned.

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, a former Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority chair, is so far the only official of Cabinet rank who has reminded the national government to take environmental caution, to initiate consultations with local communities and to be wary of attempts to squander public funds being obtained through foreign loans. *Tonette Orejas*

Big businesses abound, but old woes persist

BAGUIO'S Big Business bonanza is certain to alter the city's economic landscape, and not all of these changes will be bad for the local economy.

For one thing, the opening of Henry Sy's Shoemart mall has forced local businessmen to press for lower rent. Downtown Baguio's land values match some of the prime real estate in Makati City, and rent along Session Road, the city's main street, can go as high as P100,000.

Carlos Honorio Estepa, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry vice president for Luzon, said the Baguio downtown's rent had artificially increased prices along the city's major business district. SM will force a tempering of downtown store leases, and a more benevolent distribution of land values from Session Road to potential business districts, Estepa said.

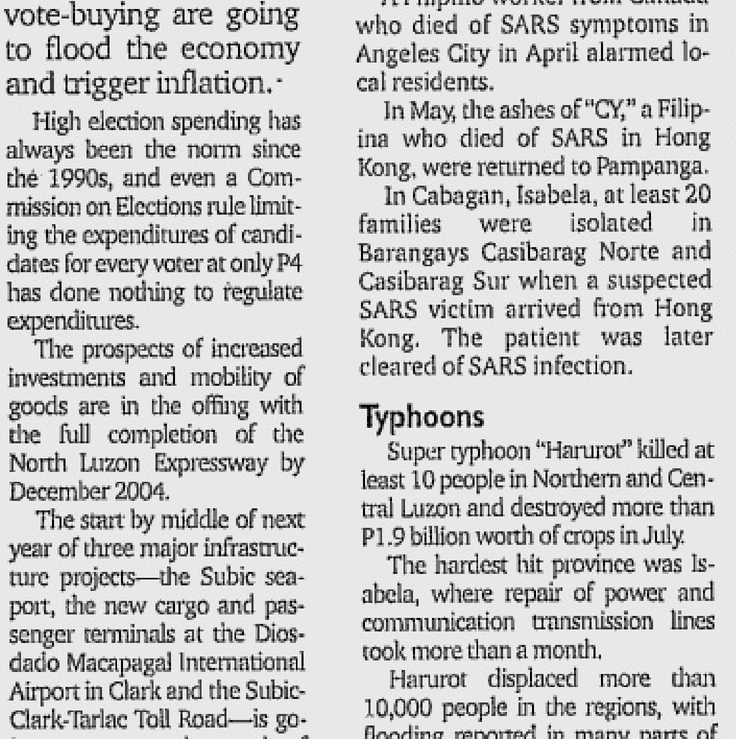
That "correction" started in November, when leaseholders of neighboring shopping malls petitioned the mall administrators to renegotiate their rent.

This trend could also shape new business zones, Estepa said, because retailers would seek new downtown areas that would be far from SM. That would leave the existing downtown area open to offices, he said.

This altered business environment would force a reinvention of politics. Although most administrations have thrown their hat behind any form of investment, SM's impact on local business illustrates their shortsighted plans for urban expansion.

Armando Galimba, regional director of the Department of Trade and Industry, said SM's present location was inappropriate and badly planned because it ignored long-established policies of business decongestion.

The aggressive infrastructure boom in Baguio still disregards old Baguio problems with water, power, and recently, traffic, city old-timers agree. *Vincent Cabreza*



BIRD by Abdul Mari Imao EV ESPIRITU

The Old Masters at the country club

By Elizabeth Lolarga
Contributor

DAYTOY TI AMIANAN

DESPITE the land trip that can take as long as nine hours, Baguio City is the season's favored getaway place, hands down. The hordes of lowlanders who've come up to enjoy the sharp dip in temperature, with wardrobe to match, are bound to run into friends and acquaintances in the spanking new mall sitting on Luneta Hill, in *ukay-ukay* stores, hotel lobbies, restaurants and, of course, the market.

Those looking for a quiet nook away from it all can visit the Baguio Country Club's (BCC) training room, the place to rest one's eyes on something other than the pine trees and the ponies. It offers a rare chance to commune with the Masters.

The paintings of National Artists Vicente Manansala, H.R. Ocampo and J. Elizalde Navarro, Frederico Aguilar Alcuaz, Jose Hernandez, Miguel Galvez, Cesar Buenaventura, Abdulmari Imao and BenCab hang on gray panels. Fabian de la Rosa is represented by a drawing, "Bordadera." These come from private collectors.

Fifteen percent of any sale of the art pieces will go to the repair of a mission school and church in Abatan, Benguet, a junction town on the way to the more popular destinations of Sagada and Bontoc, and near the mining town of Mankayan and the vegetable-growing municipality of Buguias. Baguio-Benguet Bishop Carlito Cenzon is overseeing the repair project.

Organized by Baguio residents Des and Auring Bautista, the exhibit is composed of works that are mainly in the conservative genre of Fernando Amorsolo and Ireneo Miranda. Buenaventura's "Dawn, Noon, Dusk" is made up of panels of a wooden divider, each painstakingly painted in oil with serene vignettes of the different times of the day on sea and on land.

BenCab's "Rebel" has for its subject the late Conrado Balweg who was at the height of his popularity in the late 1980s. The roughly executed portrait in cray pas bespeaks the harshness of the renegade's life.

The provenance goes back to the son of the late journalist J.V. Cruz. The family has a sizeable BenCab collection dating from the years when Cruz was the country's ambassador to the Court of St. James and the artist was a resident of London.

Manansala, more known for his transparent cubism, rendered the watercolor "Fruits" in a style reminiscent of delicate Chinese brushwork, but it is still Filipino in the choice of the makopa and papaya for subjects.

Imao uses the colors and imagery of Muslim Mindanao in his "Fishes" and "Birds." He is more known for his sculpture. The University of Baguio carries a relief that he sculpted. He has long wanted to relocate to Baguio, concerned as he is with fighting deforestation on account of the growth in the number of carvers and the collectors' demand for carvings done in precious hardwood like narra. He wants to impart the technology of metal casting as an alternative to wood carving.

The Bautistas hope that the BCC, which has waived its commission from any sale, will purchase some artworks to add to its collection. This way more people will be able to view them instead of the works staying in private collections.

The art show, which runs until Jan. 4, 2004, takes the *ukay-ukay* to a higher level.

Last-minute holiday shoppers storm Divisoria

By Tarra Quismundo

BEFORE the start of the new year, some Manila residents are making sure that they would not forget to shop for luck.

For 57-year-old Nora Minambel, luck meant wearing polka-dot-printed clothes during the New Year's Eve celebration.

Yesterday morning, she went to Divisoria in Manila with two relatives to shop for a polkadot house dress.

"I do this every year because I still believe it brings good luck," said Minambel, who came all the way from Navotas.

She said in jest that she would even jump up and down with coins in her pockets when the clock strikes midnight, signalling the start of 2004.

Brisk business

To the delight of Virgie Rosal, who sells the popular house dress or "daster" of different prints and designs for P100 to P150, business was a bit better yesterday, as shoppers came to her looking for polkadot prints.

"They have started buying today, and I expect more to come tomorrow," Rosal said yesterday.

Minambel, meanwhile, had one other goal for braving the heavy traffic and crush of people in Divisoria yesterday.

"I am going to buy 12 kinds of round fruits also for luck," she said.

Minambel is referring to the new year tradition where each round fruit represents a wish for luck for every month of the year.

Bargain hunter's paradise

In what is considered a bargain hunter's paradise, where toys, gift items, jewelry, clothes, pillows, bags, shoes, textile and scores of other products can be bought at discounted prices, space was more precious than it already was yesterday.

Traffic on Recto Avenue and Juan Luna were crawling, as they struggled to get through the streets with portions already occupied by vendors, some of whom also had taken over stairs of shopping centers in the commercial area.

The shoppers, meanwhile, came to and fro at a slowed down pace, as they moved shoulder to shoulder, snaking through the dozens of stalls and vendors' mats all over Divisoria.

For fruit vendor Regita Obiña, Recto's old railroad became the only space left to do business.

A vendor's life

When she was 12, Obiña, now 40, of Parola Compound, Tondo, started selling plastic bags in Divisoria, where her aunt was a fruit vendor. She said that she has seen how the number of vendors in Divisoria ballooned.

But despite having been caught several times for illegal vending, she returns to Divisoria everyday to sell fruits in season. Yesterday, she sold papaya at P20 per kilo, while the rest of the vendors sold round-shaped fruits for the New Year celebration.

"Every Christmas and New Year, there are so many shoppers here, especially between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.," said Obiña, a witness to the seemingly chaotic Divisoria every year.

Luck be their lady this year

On Ongpin Street in Binondo, Manila, shopping is far from tedious.

People go there to look for the lucky charms of their choice in the several Chinese shops along the street.

Inside one such shop, luck came in different shapes and sizes.

Clients can choose from figurines shaped like fishes, frogs, coins and the buddha, made out of porcelain, metal, wood, crystal, jade and other precious stones.

And since 2004 is the year of the monkey, according to the Chinese calendar, monkey-shaped charms are among the bestselling items in the shops.

SIGNED AND SEALED
CHIEF Supt. Oscar Valenzuela, Eastern Police District director, and Supt. Nicanor Casaclang use masking tape to seal off the muzzles of the rifles of their men to prevent them from firing their weapons on New Year's Eve. The seals contain the signatures of the police officials. EDWIN BACASMAS

3 die, thousands left homeless in Caloocan fire

By Edson Tandoc Jr.
and Leila Salaverria

THREE people, including an 84-year-old woman, were confirmed to have died in a fire that razed a residential area in Caloocan City on Monday night.

More than 900 families were also left homeless in the six-hour blaze that hit the densely populated BMBA Compound on 2nd Avenue, fire officials said.

Juanita Cunanan, 84, and Christopher Ching, 25, were burned to death. A third body was also found in the ruins.

Caloocan fire chief Agapito Nacario yesterday told the INQUIRER that the third casualty was so badly burned that they could not even estimate the victim's age.

Another resident, Vermine Garcia, 56, suffered cuts in her right leg.

There were also unconfirmed reports that a fourth victim had died in the fire.

The fire began at 7:50 p.m. on Monday. Because of strong winds that night, the fire rapidly spread to nearby houses.

Nelson Abunales, 34, was alone in his house watching television when he heard people yelling. He went down their two-story house and was startled to see the nearby houses already in flames.

He ran away, leaving behind all his possessions that were destroyed in the fire.

The fire allegedly began in the house of Nicanor Leonardo. An unattended candle on the altar of Leonardo's house caused the fire. FO1 Marcelino Espeso said.

By 9 p.m., the fire reached Task Force Charlie, the fourth to the highest fire alarm. More than 50 fire trucks from various cities responded to the emergency.

Lolita Amado's house was just in front of Leonardo's. When she saw the fire, Amado took her daughter and ran, leaving their sari-sari store. But the only way out of the compound was through a long narrow alley jammed with people struggling to escape.

People were elbowing each other, some were stepped on, Amado recalled. Some men went to the wall surrounding the compound and smashed it with rocks so people could escape the blazing compound.

By 11 p.m. the fire was under control. The Philippine Army also had set up tents where residents spent the night wondering what will become of them this new year.

Leonardo and his wife had fled. But when their 16-year-old son showed up, the furious residents rushed to slap him. Fire officials managed to take the youth away from the irate residents.

In Manila, an hour-long fire razed eight houses, including a meat shop and a mineral water store, destroying P3 million worth of property.

The blaze, which reached the fifth alarm, began at 4:12 p.m. on the second floor of an apartment on Onyx Street in San Andres, rented by an Ernesto Sumagui. The fire was put out at 5:08 p.m.

Miko Sotto's death an accident, say cops

By Luige del Puerto

IT WAS simply an accident.

Senior Supt. Ericson Velasquez, Mandaluyong Police chief, yesterday declared that the case of matinee idol Marcelino "Miko" Sotto is closed, adding that no new evidence has surfaced to suggest that the death of the young actor wasn't an accident.

"Our findings is that it was an accident," Velasquez said. "So as far as the police are concerned, this case is closed."

At dawn Monday, Miko fell off the 9th floor of the San Francisco Gardens Condominium, where he lived.

Miko was with his cousin, Oyo Boy, son of actor and television host Vic Sotto by actress Dina Bonnevie, and GMA 7 production designer Marko Medina, when the accident happened.

Velasquez said Miko's family did not request the police to conduct further investigation, and refused an autopsy on the young actor's remains.

"Even if the family had requested for an inquiry, we would have told them that there is no evidence to warrant one," he said.

At 4:30 a.m. Monday, security-in-charge Sarlando Salvani had seen Miko, Oyo Boy and Medina climb the railings between the 8th and 9th floors of the condominium.

The cousins hopped onto a plant box, while Medina stayed behind.

He said he sent roving guard Glenn Peroy to tell the boys to clear the area. But Peroy had barely started to go up the steps when Miko fell, the guard said.

Miko's body now lies at the Sanctuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park in Makati City.

METROBRIEFS

Gangs fight over pretty girl

A 24-YEAR-OLD man was killed and four others were wounded when members of a street gang clashed in Manila early yesterday morning over a pretty 15-year-old girl. Allan Villafranca, of Quezon City, was shot dead while King Arthur Gonzales, 20; Benson Bernardo, 20; Emil Pingol, 20; and Paul Prades, 21, were wounded. A certain Joeann Jett Tenorio, 19, was arrested while two others, Mark Lester Tenorio and a certain "Alfie," are being hunted by the police. All are members of the True Brown Style fraternity. The victims were shot at by the group of Tenorio at about 2 a.m. at the corner of R. Papa Street and A.C. Herrera in Tondo. The shooting was reportedly prompted by jealousy after two other gang members fought over a girl. Investigation showed that the girl who was going out with one of the gang members had been the girlfriend of another gang mate. *Leila Salaverria*

'Gift' lands four in jail

A SMALL gift-wrapped box which later yielded suspected shabu led to the arrest yesterday before noon of Bayani Gonzales, 42; Sergio Lito Rodriguez, 36; Lanie de Guzman, 37; and Evangeline Aquino, 35, all of San Rafael, Bulacan. The four were in a white Toyota Tamaraw FX on their way to Bulacan when policemen stopped them at a checkpoint along Dimasalang Street at 11:10 a.m. PO3 Edwin Romano, a member of the Anti-Kidnapping Task Force of the Western Police District got suspicious, when Rodriguez allegedly tried to hide a "gift," which was later found to contain four transparent plastic sachets believed to be high-grade shabu. The two women denied knowledge of the drugs saying they were only hitching a ride to Bulacan. *Leila Salaverria*

American nabbed for drugs

AMERICAN David Lawrence Brinker, 44, should have just paid his rent at the Chartered House Inn in Makati City. He now faces charges for possession of illegal drug paraphernalia after police found improvised glass tooters, burners, disposable lighters and aluminum foil were found in his room. The manager of the Inn located at 906 Pasay Road initially sought assistance from Barangay San Lorenzo officials after Brinker had allegedly failed to pay five months rent. Kagawad Jose Emmanuel Recto and Kagawad Norman Golez then asked for police help after suspecting that the American might be using illegal drugs. At 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, members of the Makati Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force went to the foreigners room and found the alleged drug paraphernalia. *Margaux Ortiz*

Man hacks wife, children then sets house on fire in Pasig

By Luige del Puerto

IN A FIT of jealous rage, a jobless man on Monday allegedly hacked his wife and children before setting his house on fire in Pasig City.

Police said Rudy Gilana, of Avocado Street, Teachers Village, Lupang Pari, Barangay San Miguel, Pasig City, and his son, Wilmour, 6, died in the fire that spread to four other houses in their neighborhood.

Gilana's wife, Rosie, 45, sustained a gaping wound in the head. The daughter, Leny Lyn, 20, was wounded in the chest, with the blade puncturing her lungs.

Both, however, are in stable condition, according to Dr. Jesus Battad, resident surgeon of the Pasig City General Hospital.

Relatives told the police that this was not the first time Gilana had gone amuck out of jealousy, according to P01 Lardy Ignacio.

Around 3:30 p.m. that fateful day, the neighbors heard the couple fighting.

When Ronnie Quintoy, one of the neighbors, peeped through a slightly open window, he said he saw the suspect hacking his wife and daughter.

As the two women were being rushed to the hospital, Gilana turned his attention to his son, Wilmour, and hacked him.

Gilana then set fire to his house, while he and his son were inside, Ignacio said.

The fire quickly spread to four more houses, rendering at least four other families homeless, Ignacio said.

Street kids wish Xmas would stay a bit longer

By Luige del Puerto

A THIN girl wearing a wide grin on her face on Christmas Eve stopped a middle-aged man as he stepped out of the gate of the Immaculate Concepcion Cathedral in Pasig City.

"Merry Christmas, sir!" she said with the most beautiful smile she could muster.

The man smiled back at the young girl blocking his way, reached for his pocket and handed her a P5 coin.

"Thank you so much!" she said in Filipino, and hurried to stop another churchgoer, a young lady this time.

The scene was repeated several times before the girl, Abigail, 11, and at least five other street children decided it was time for a glass of lemonade.

Speaking between sips, Abigail said that the days leading to Christmas have been a blessing.

"People are kind during Christmas," she said.

Abigail explained that on ordinary days, people would have ignored the children or shoo them away.

Christmas is for the young, and this couldn't be truer for Metro Manila's street children who, in the two weeks leading to Christmas, have received kindness and compassion from their well-off countrymen.

There are about 80,000 street children in the country, many of them in Metro Manila, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef).

Now that the holidays are almost over, Abigail and the street kids who lay wait at the Church's gates could only wish for one thing, that is for Christmas to stay a bit longer.

"I wish it were Christmas everyday," Abigail said. "If that's not possible, I wish the holidays would last longer."

On Christmas day, a church patron gave them spaghetti, which they devoured with gusto.

A day before that, a man treated them to lunch at a Jollibee branch right across the cathedral.

Arnold, Abigail's 5-year-old brother, said that he hopes to eat at the fast food chain every day.

To which Abigail replied: "That is why you should study hard when you get the chance to so you can get a job and buy all the food you want."

Abigal and her brother live in Bolante Dos, a depressed area in Pasig City.

They go to the church to beg, although they wouldn't call it begging this time of the year.

"*Namamusko kami* (we're asking for Christmas gifts)," the children said.

Abigail and her friends are the lucky ones.

Others, like Jacklyn, Jomar, Junalyn and B-Mar, aged 4 to 12, live in the church's parking area with their mom, Lucy Bela, a parking attendant.

The family has been on and off the streets for the last six years.

Bela, an emaciated woman of 33, said she only has one wish—to have a house for her four kids. It wouldn't matter if it were small, so long as it could accommodate them all, she said.

But most of the time, she shrugs off the thought like dusts on her shoulders.

"I have to get busy," she said. "I can't afford to dwell on my thoughts, on wishes

Right now, the important thing is that business is good, she said as she showed a car a vacant parking lot.

The driver gave her a P10 bill.

"They would normally just give me P3 or P5," she said.

Looking at her children, Bela said she too wishes Christmas would stay a bit longer.

PEOPLE are kinder on Christmas than they are the rest of the year, according to Jocelyn, who has been begging in the streets for as long as she can remember. RUDY ESPERAS

SIX DIGIT
5 8 8 8 4 6

SUERTRES
(In exact order)
6 7 7

6/42 Luzon
2 12 25 31 33 41

Vis-Min
13 15 21 25 28 42

Police rescue kidnapped boy

By Alcuin Papa and Gil Cabacungan

THE 2-YEAR-OLD son of a Filipino-Chinese businessman kidnapped on Dec. 2 in Muntinlupa City is now back with his family.

The Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Pacer) and National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktaf) rescued the boy yesterday morning in Calamba City in Laguna.

According to Laguna police director Senior Supt. Edwin Corvera, the boy was rescued inside a three-bedroom bungalow at the corner of Katapatan and Karunungan Streets inside the Pamana Homes Subdivision in Barangay Bucal.

(Although the government named the boy and his parents and even presented them to media, the INQUIRER does not identify kidnap victims who are minors.)

Naktaf head Angelo Reyes said they arrested a suspect identified as Wyte Patrana.

The boy, the son of a glass and aluminum factory owner, was abducted by several gunmen along the Susana Heights Extension in Muntinlupa.

The suspects demanded P50 million from the boy's parents but they agreed to lower it to P1 million.

However, the kidnappers did not release the victim even after the boy's family paid the ransom.

Recently, the suspects asked for an additional P5 million. This time, the Pacer and the Naktaf already stepped in.

The police arrested the man who was supposed to pick up the ransom. During interrogation, the suspect told police of the safehouse in Laguna.

Authorities swooped down on the safehouse at 8:45 a.m. yesterday and rescued the boy unharmed.

He and his family were later presented to media by President Macapagal-Arroyo, whose government is being rocked by allegations of weakness in the face of rising criminality.

Ms Macapagal is seeking reelection in next year's polls.

The child's grandfather, a judge, thanked the President for the child's safe rescue.

According to Chief Supt. Prospero Noble, the boy's parents were pleasantly surprised that their child has become less choosy of what he ate after his ordeal. *With Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

[redacted]

THE RESCUED boy lands a kiss on the cheek of President Macapagal-Arroyo as a gesture of thanks during a media presentation in Malacañang. MALACAÑANG PHOTO

Start the year with an MMS BANG!
Show 'em all what they're missin' through MMS messaging.
Hapi new DEAR!
Get a chance to WIN:
1 of 4 ADDICT MINI COOPERS
or 1 of 2 ADDICT DUCATI SUPERBIKES
2 MMS = 1 RAFFLE ENTRY
The more raffle entries = The more chances of winning
addict Download Speed
addict mobile
Get hooked.
SMART

Send Images, Sound Clips and Video Streams through your Addict Mobile phone for just P5 per MMS sent! So start the year right, and keep sending those holiday cheers.

Elderly inmates up for clemency

By Luige del Puerto

FIRST, the good news. A total of 20 women from the Correctional Institute for Women in Mandaluyong City have been recommended for executive clemency as of Dec. 12.

Now, the bad: Nothing has happened to the recommendation.

Atty. Daisy Arce, a volunteer lawyer from the Office of First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, said they reviewed the women's cases in July and took the matter up with the Department of Justice.

However, the Board of Pardons and Parole, which is under the office of Arroyo's wife, President Macapagal-Arroyo, has yet to issue any decision on their recommendation.

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Makati honors its own heroes

By Margaux C. Ortiz

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Also honored during the ceremony were Chief Insp. Nestor Salvador, Sr. Insp. Roberto Gutierrez, Col. Herminio Taylo, SPO4 Mario Sayao, SPO4 Rosita Lacay, Cpl. Enrico Camino, Cpl. Enrique Era, SPO3 Roberto Nicolas, SPO2 Alejandro Dimaya, SPO2 Nolito Valizado, SPO2 Honesto Aldave, PO3 Wilfredo Villarama and PO2 Renato Trinidad.

SIX DIGIT
5 8 8 8 4 6

SUERTRES
(In exact order)
6 7 7

6/42 Luzon
2 12 25 31 33 41

Vis-Min
13 15 21 25 28 42

Police rescue kidnapped boy

By Alcuin Papa and Gil Cabacungan

THE 2-YEAR-OLD son of a Filipino-Chinese businessman kidnapped on Dec. 2 in Muntinlupa City is now back with his family.

The Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Pacer) and National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktaf) rescued the boy yesterday morning in Calamba City in Laguna.

According to Laguna police director Senior Supt. Edwin Corvera, the boy was rescued inside a three-bedroom bungalow at the corner of Katapatan and Karunungan Streets inside the Pamana Homes Subdivision in Barangay Bucal.

(Although the government named the boy and his parents and even presented them to media, the INQUIRER does not identify kidnap victims who are minors.)

Naktaf head Angelo Reyes said they arrested a suspect identified as Wyte Patrana.

The boy, the son of a glass and aluminum factory owner, was abducted by several gunmen along the Susana Heights Extension in Muntinlupa.

The suspects demanded P50 million from the boy's parents but they agreed to lower it to P1 million.

However, the kidnappers did not release the victim even after the boy's family paid the ransom.

Recently, the suspects asked for an additional P5 million. This time, the Pacer and the Naktaf already stepped in.

The police arrested the man who was supposed to pick up the ransom. During interrogation, the suspect told police of the safehouse in Laguna.

Authorities swooped down on the safehouse at 8:45 a.m. yesterday and rescued the boy unharmed.

He and his family were later presented to media by President Macapagal-Arroyo, whose government is being rocked by allegations of weakness in the face of rising criminality.

Ms Macapagal is seeking reelection in next year's polls.

The child's grandfather, a judge, thanked the President for the child's safe rescue.

According to Chief Supt. Prospero Noble, the boy's parents were pleasantly surprised that their child has become less choosy of what he ate after his ordeal. *With Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

THE RESCUED boy lands a kiss on the cheek of President Macapagal-Arroyo as a gesture of thanks during a media presentation in Malacañang. MALACANANG PHOTO

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Elderly inmates up for clemency

By Luige del Puerto

FIRST, the good news. A total of 20 women from the Correctional Institute for Women in Mandaluyong City have been recommended for executive clemency as of Dec. 12.

Now, the bad: Nothing has happened to the recommendation.

Atty. Daisy Arce, a volunteer lawyer from the Office of First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, said they reviewed the women's cases in July and took the matter up with the Department of Justice.

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BASKETBALL: NBA-Pacers vs Cavs; 8 a.m. (r-8 p.m.); Solar Sports—Indiana takes on Central Division rival Cleveland.
Vintage NBA-Elgin Baylor; 11 a.m.; Solar Sports—Learn more about one of the early high-flyers in the league.
NBA Greatest Game-1970 All-Star Game; 12 noon; Solar Sports—Travel back in time and witness the gathering of the NBA's elite players in the mid-season classic.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

SPORTS TV
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SPORTS

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Assistant Editor **Edwin M. Villanueva**

FILE photo shows De Ocampo (left) trying to block Damien Cantrell of Talk 'N Text. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Yancy traded to Talk 'N Text

By June Navarro

TALK 'N Text got another prized catch a day after snaring one of the biggest fish in the Philippine Basketball Association.

The FedEx Express yesterday swapped 6-foot-9 slotman Yancy de Ocampo for the Phone Pals' 2004 and 2006 first-round picks in a bid to widen their choices in the PBA Rookie Draft next month.

By unloading De Ocampo, the league's top pick in the 2002 season, the Bert Lina-owned franchise has acquired the Phone Pals' ninth pick overall in the rookie raffle set for Jan. 16 at the Glorietta Activity Center.

That's aside from the third and fourth first-round picks the Express will exercise in the Draft, boosting their chances of landing the biggest names in the pool.

"It gives us a better chance of getting some of the bright prospects in the Draft," said FedEx Express team manager Lito Alvarez.

Alvarez revealed that the Express would use their first-round picks on the likes of Rich Alvarez, Marc Pingris and Ervin Sotto or any of the national players in the Draft.

If one of these players slips from their grasp in the ninth pick overall, Alvarez said they would snag swingman Gary David granting that the PBL MVP would still be available.

"Trading Yancy to Talk 'N Text will prove to be beneficial

YANCY/ A20

AP'S CHOICES

Kobe Bryant court case voted top story of 2003

THE YOUNG hotel worker's accusation was shocking enough: Thrilled by a chance encounter with a celebrity, she went to his room only to be forced over a chair and sexually assaulted.

More startling was the name of the accused: Kobe Bryant.

Exactly what happened behind a locked door at a Colorado resort June 30 probably will be up to a jury to decide next year. But it didn't take long for the accusations to hurt the reputations of Bryant and his accuser.

Reporters and Bryant's supporters and bashers flocked to the small mountain town of Eagle, Colorado, over the next few months for a series of court appearances that brought out graphic details of the 19-year-old woman's charges along with revelations about her past.

Even with a trial months away, it became the most-watched case against a celebrity sports figure since O.J. Simpson was charged with murder. It was chosen the story of the year by the newspaper and broadcast members of The Associated Press.

In the AP voting announced Monday, the Bryant saga received 30 first-place votes for 616 points, beating out Lance Armstrong's record-tying fifth straight Tour de France title (19 first-place votes, 540 points), the Florida Marlins' surprising World Series win (12 first-place votes, 536 points) and Annika Sorenstam becoming the first woman in 58 years to play on the PGA Tour (seven first-place votes, 473 points).

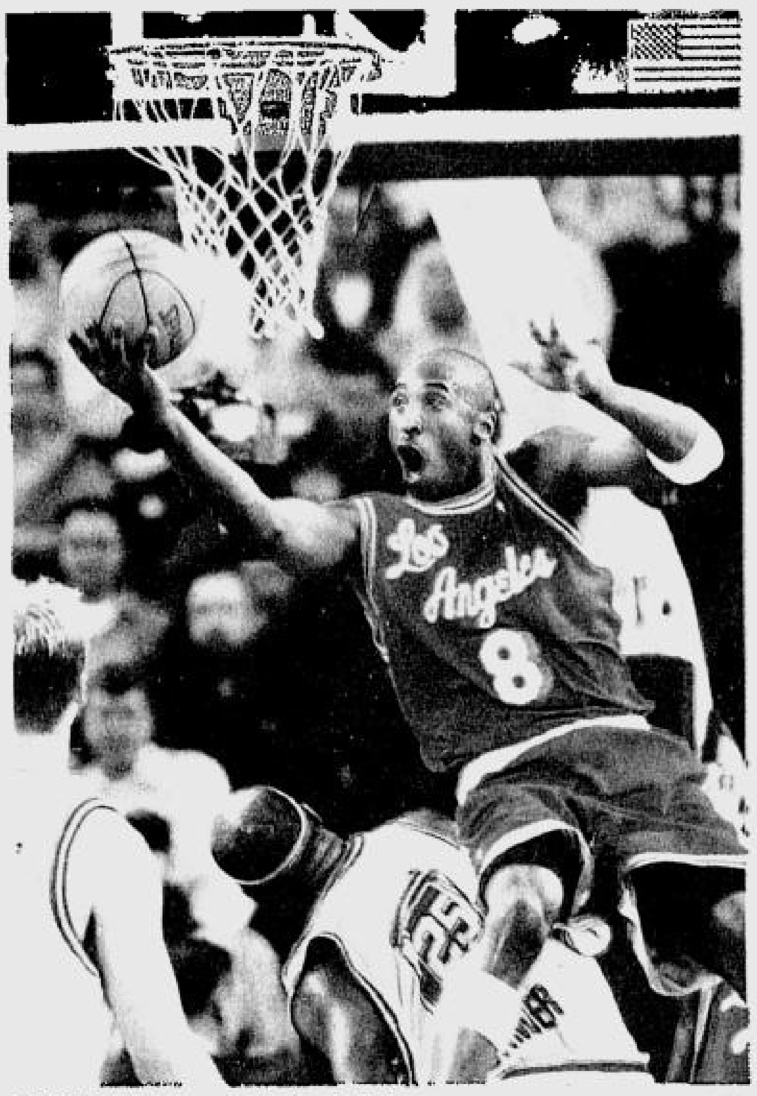
Ten points were awarded for first place, down to one point for a 10th-place vote.

Rounding out the top 10 were: Ohio State beating Miami in double overtime for the college football national championship; Sammy Sosa caught using a corked bat; steroid scandals; Tampa Bay's Super Bowl win over Oakland; Carmelo Anthony leading Syracuse to its first college basketball national title; and Ben Curtis capturing the British Open in his first appearance at a major.

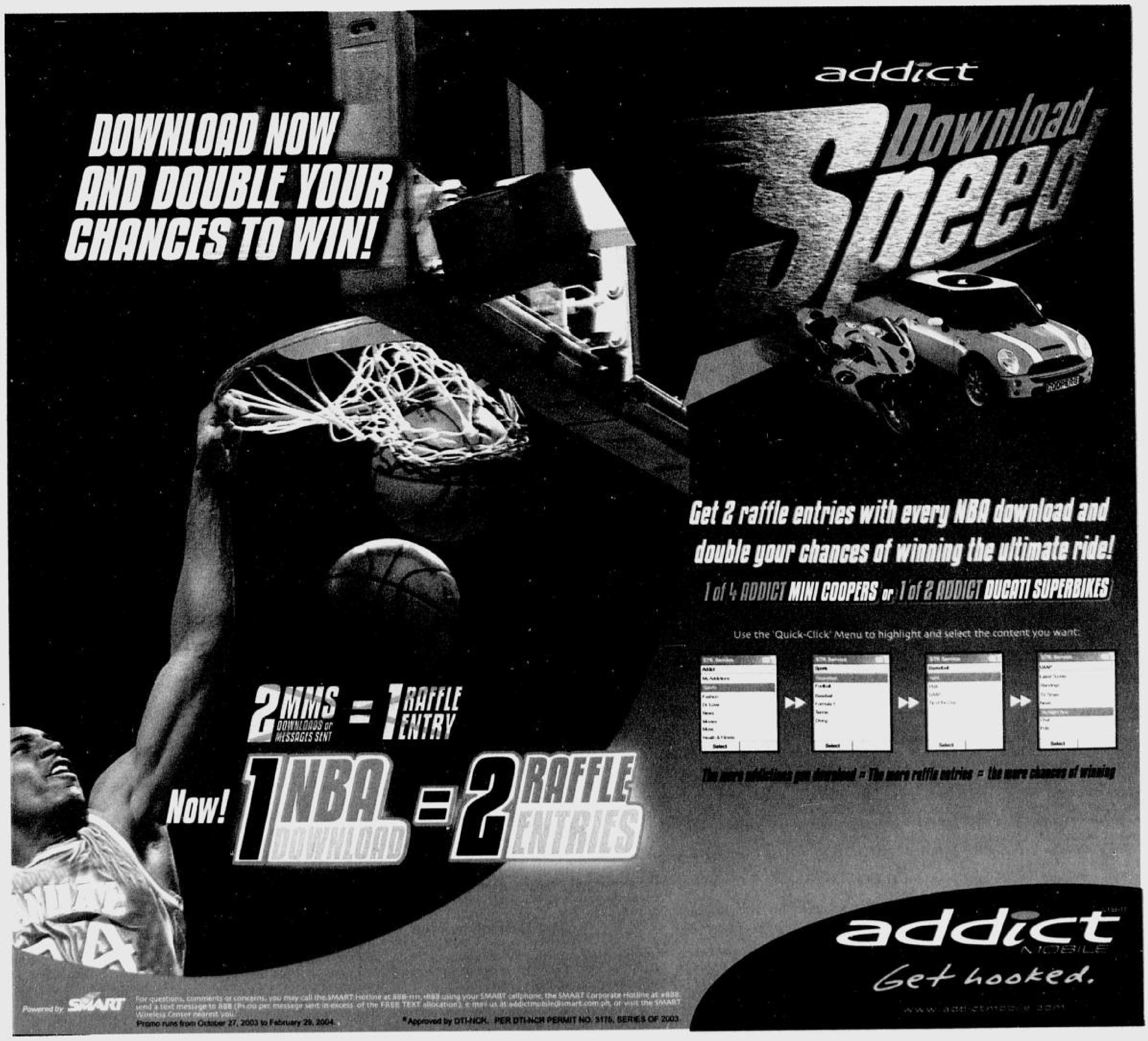
Kobe Bryant isn't just any basketball player. He's an NBA superstar making millions a year on the court and just as much in endorsements. Advertisers saw him as the next Michael Jordan, and he enjoyed a pristine image as a likable player who was happily married and the father of a baby girl.

A 2002 poll rated him the third-best product endorser in

KOBE/ A20



BRYANT: Isn't just any basketball player REUTERS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Promo runs from October 27, 2003 to February 29, 2004.
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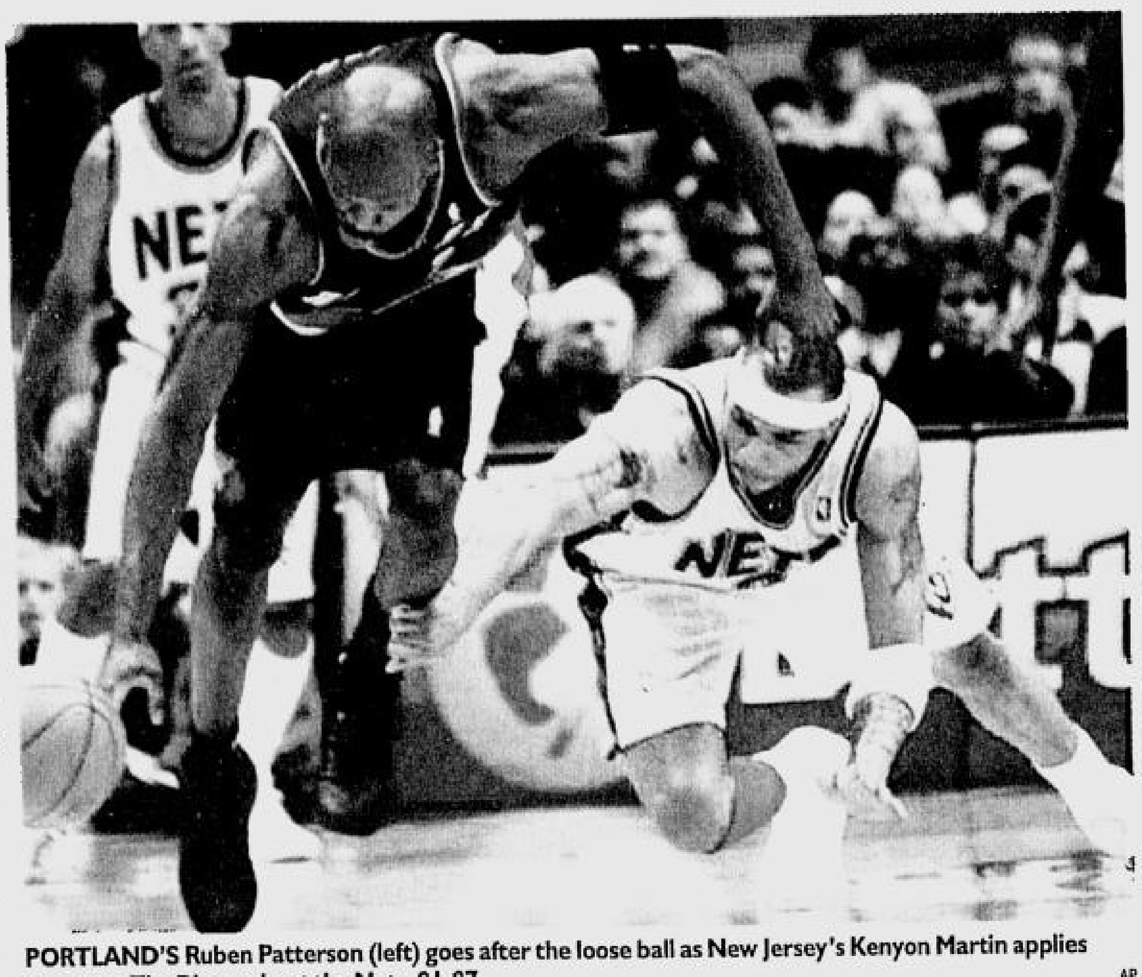
NBA ROUNDUP

Blazers subdue Nets, score 1st win on road



PORTLAND'S Ruben Patterson (left) goes after the loose ball as New Jersey's Kenyon Martin applies pressure. The Blazers beat the Nets, 91-87.

AP

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—Rasheed Wallace scored 16 points to help the Portland Trail Blazers win their first road game this season, a 91-87 victory over the New Jersey Nets on Monday.

Portland had dropped its first 10 road games this season, but became the last team in the NBA to win away from home courtesy of a stingy defense and superior rebounding in the fourth quarter.

Zach Randolph added 14 points and 13 rebounds for the Trail Blazers, who held a 44-28 edge on the boards.

Jeff McInnis chipped in 13 points for Portland, who handed the Nets just their third loss in the last 12 games.

Richard Jefferson scored 24 points for New Jersey, while Kenyon Martin contributed 19 points and Jason Kidd added 13 points, seven rebounds and seven assists.

In Indianapolis, Jermaine O'Neal had 20 points and 13 rebounds to help the Indiana Pacers edge the Memphis Grizzlies, 94-86.

Ron Artest, who has been arguing with coach Rick Carlisle recently, scored 18 points coming off the bench for Indiana, who handed Memphis its sixth straight loss.

Pau Gasol led Memphis with 20 points and eight rebounds.

In Orlando, Keith Van Horn had 19 points and 10 rebounds to lead the New York Knicks to their third straight road victory, a 114-86 win over the Magic.

New York's Allan Houston and Frank Williams both added 18 points.

Tracy McGrady was held scoreless for the first time since joining Orlando in 2000. He suffered a strained right hip flexor after playing just 11 minutes, left the game and did not return.

Gordan Giricek led Orlando with 21 points.

In Detroit, Chauncey Billups scored 31 points as the Pistons beat the New Orleans Hornets, 108-99.

Ben Wallace hauled down 18 rebounds and scored 16 points for Detroit, while Richard Hamilton chipped in with 13 points and seven assists. *Reuters*

Complete results:

New York 114, Orlando 86; Indiana 94, Memphis 86; Portland 91, New Jersey 87; Detroit 108, New Orleans 99; Miami 90, Chicago 83; Seattle 87, Houston 86; Utah 106, Philadelphia 97; Boston 100, Golden State 91; Phoenix 113, LA Clippers 105.

SPORTSWATCH

President's Award for lady keglers

CLUTARIO

LIZA del Rosario, Liza Clutario and Cecille Yap achieved what no other Filipino, or Asian player for that matter, has ever done in the last 20 years—bagging in record-breaking fashion the gold medal in the women's trios of the World Tenpin Bowling (FIQ) Championships in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Two meet records were shattered in the wake of the Filipinas' splendid performance that transpired in the final quarter of 2003. Garnering a combined 2,062 pinfalls in their final three games, Del Rosario, Clutario and Yap broke the previous mark of 1,954 set by Japan in 1999. Not only that, their 3,797 total in all of six games smashed the old world standard of 3,782 a Korean trio also booked in 1999. As if those were not enough, Clutario, the youngest among the three at 24, capped the stint by winning the silver medal in the women's masters and adding a bronze in the women's all-event. Their impressive showing had the trio copping third place overall in the women's class behind England and the United States. Recognizing that one proud stretch for local bowling in the middle of September, the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) bestows on the three ladies the PSA President's Award during its annual Awards Night at the Manila Pavilion on Jan. 9. Given to a group or individual who achieved exemplary honor, the bubbly team of the 25-year-old Del Rosario, last year's Asian tenpin singles champion, Clutario and Yap, 25, is only the second recipient of the special award. The Ateneo Blue Eagles got the award last year after ending a 14-year title drought in the University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) men's basketball tournament.

3 losing NFL coaches fired

NEW YORK—Dave McGinnis, Gregg Williams and Dick Jauron learned just how precarious NFL head coaching positions are. All three were fired on the day after disappointing seasons ended with losing records. McGinnis was released by the Arizona Cardinals after going 4-12. The Buffalo Bills let go of Williams after a 6-10 record, while the Chicago Bears dismissed Jauron, who was 7-9 this season. Left dangling was Oakland's Bill Callahan, less than one year after he led the Raiders to the Super Bowl. And Washington's Steve Spurrier had not yet committed to returning to the Redskins, even though owner Daniel Snyder said he expects the ol' ball-coach to be back. The three firings Monday meant five head coaches are out of work: Dan Reeves was fired by Atlanta and Jim Fassel by the New York Giants during the season. McGinnis, 16-32 in three full seasons in Arizona, went from the thrill of a last-second victory over Minnesota, preventing the Vikings from making the playoffs, to the anguish of being unemployed hours later. His entire staff was released, too. *AP*

P3.6M up for grabs at Roligon

A WHOPPING prize of P3.6 million has been put up by top promoter Rolly Ligon for the Roligon Mega Cockpit's "14th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby" on Jan. 31, Feb. 3, 5, 7, 10 and 12. Among the early birds who confirmed their participation are Parañaque sportsman Boy Marzo and tabloid executive Rey Briones, who are fielding two entries each. Marzo and Briones are recent winners in the 273-entry "Apordabol Derby" last month. Entry fee is P11,000 while minimum bet is P5,500. The champion handler and gaffer gets P200,00 and P100,000, respectively. Ligon reiterated that the guaranteed prize is P3.6 million, as indicated in the derby invitations. Participants may field an entry during the 3-cock eliminations on Jan. 31, Feb. 3, 5 and 7. The semifinals is on Feb. 10 and the finals on Feb. 12. "To all the participants, please make an early reservation of choice cockhouses. We are expecting more than 400 entires for this derby," Roligon general manager Danny Ty said.

Cagayan boxer still comatose

CAGAYAN de Oro City boxer John Eman Juarez remains in critical condition at Cebu Doctor's Hospital's intensive care unit following a six-hour head surgery performed by top neuro-surgeon Benigno Aldana early Monday morning. Juarez was operated on to remove a blood clot from his brain and ease up its swelling caused by his recent knockout loss to ALA Boy Rocky Fuentes. Last Sunday, Juarez faced Fuentes in a scheduled 8-rounder at the Danao City Sports Complex, but was declared unable to continue by referee Baden Ribaya following a punch to his abdomen that sent him down on all fours. *Salven Lagumbay, contributor*

Petrova top seed in Canberra meet

CANBERRA—World No.12 and French Open semifinalist Nadia Petrova was on Tuesday named the top seed for the Canberra Women's Classic tennis tournament starting here on Jan. 11. The Russian climbed the world rankings at Roland Garros this year when she knocked out former world No.1 Monica Seles and Jennifer Capriati on her way to the semi-finals, where she went down to Kim Clijsters. The eight seeds at the Canberra tournament, a lead-up event to the Australian Open, all rank within the world's top 50. *AFP*

Baguio City all set to host Rotary tilt; P4M at stake

PARTICIPANTS of the Rotary Golfing Fellowship Foundation of the Philippines (RGFFP) northern leg tournament slated Jan. 15-17 in Baguio City will be in for a big golf treat, organizers announced yesterday.

The cool golfing weather that can be enjoyed only in Baguio plus a prize bonanza worth almost P4 million will guarantee another memorable stint for swinging Rotarians at the popular Camp John Hay and Baguio Country Club courses.

The 18th edition of the RGFFP tilt sponsored by Cebu Pacific, Copacabana Hotel, Pilipinas Shell, Futura Window Covering, Taylor Made, PLDT, GNC and Fedex will be a tournament in full bloom with a prize showcase never before offered in its long history.

Topping the list of prizes are a St. Monique Duplex House put up by Globe Asiatic Realty, a million pesos in cash, a brand-new Toyota Altis, a Rolex watch and a Taylor Made golf set.

These will be awarded to players who would shoot holes-in-one. What makes it different from other events is that each player will have no less than 17 chances—11 at BCC and six at CJH—in two days to win the prizes.

There will be a particular hole which will have three pins. And if nobody scores an ace on that hole, the prize will be raffled off.

Teams paying a tournament fee of P4,500 will be allowed to field in four players with the best three counting for each round. Interested parties will have until Jan. 7, 2004, to register at the RGFFP office (tel. nos. 7218896 or 7210564).

Non-Rotarians will have a separate division but will be eligible to win any of the hole-in-one prizes.

The leadership of the RGFFP headed by its chair, Melito "Bimbo" Salazar, president/CEO Poch Borromeo and EVP/COO Albert Que, also this year's overall tournament chair, has lined up a series of side-events to spice up the affair.

These include nightly dinners and cocktails and the launching of the new RGFFP logo.

Que said that both venues have graciously allowed practice rounds on Jan. 12-14 for the players to get used to the exciting conditions. There will be shuttles from tee to the fairways and greens on some holes at the Baguio Country Club in consideration of the tough terrain of the course.

Kobe . . .

From page A19

sports, behind Tiger Woods and Jordan.

All that changed overnight when Bryant was arrested and charged with sexually assaulting the hotel worker who checked him into the Lodge & Spa at Cordillera in the mountains outside Eagle.

The charges were so out of character with Bryant's public image that one noted television interviewer—and friend of Bryant's—immediately proclaimed on national TV that he would be "astonished" if the charge were true.

The accuser told police she checked in Bryant—who had gone to Colorado for arthroscopic surgery on his knee—and two bodyguards, then showed him to his room. Bryant, she said, told her to return in a few minutes and give him a tour of the resort. She did, and they later began kissing in his room.

The woman said she tried to leave, but Bryant pulled her dress up, forced her over a chair and had sex with her. Afterward, she was told to go clean up, she said, made to perform one final act, and ordered never to tell anyone about what happened.

Bryant held a tearful news conference in Los Angeles to deny the charge, while admitting he had consensual sex with the woman. He held hands with his wife Vanessa, who was given a new $4-million diamond ring after his arrest.

"I'm a human being. I'm a man just like everybody else. I mourn. I cry. Just like everybody else," Bryant said. *AP*

Yancy traded . . .

From page A19

for him in the long run. With the Express, he didn't get the playing time he deserved," said Alvarez.

The move came a day after Red Bull Barako dealt 2002 MVP Willie Miller to the Phone Pals, who now look more formidable with the two new acquisitions around.

Miller was shipped to the Phone Pals in exchange for a first-round pick and two players from the Talk 'N Text roster except for Asi Taulava and Jimmy Alapag.

Sources said the Barakos would most likely get an off-guard and swingman from the Talk 'N Text lineup.

Will they continue cheating Manny Pacquiao in 2004?

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

THE BIGGEST story for the Pinoy in 2003 came out in the sports page.

Manny Pacquiao's sensational stoppage of the feared Marco Antonio Barrera, reportedly the finest featherweight boxer on Earth, was indeed front page stuff.

Pacquiao gallantly showed everybody that Barrera's greatness was all a wild rumor.

In fact, Pacquiao's incredible feat that rendered boxing experts all over the world dumbfounded is a frontrunner not only as No. 1 sports story but as top news in RP for 2003.

So Fernando Poe Jr. in 2003 agreed to run for president.

FPJ, however, becomes top news only next year.

That's if the charts and trends, which all favor this supreme gentleman, stay in form all the way to the May 2004 polls.

Jose Pidal, initially brushed off by Malacañang as nonexistent but later acknowledged and owned by a brother of the First Gentleman, was on top of the charts.

But with the expert handling of both escape strategists and media geniuses, the scandal that rocked the foundations of the Palace by the Pasig was inevitably buried in the onrush of national events.

***

Can Jose Pidal make a comeback to hound the election bid of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo?

Well, enemies of Mrs. Arroyo can be expected to abuse presidential dignity armed with issues bigger, more solid than the Jose Pidal scandal.

However, the top poll question being asked around is: Will it be GMA or FPJ?

Whether or not President Arroyo can make a successful defense of the presidency will definitely be top news for 2004.

But, going back to boxing, Pinoy sports fans are left in suspense on who will be Pacquiao's next opponent.

Last week, sports page headlines blazed with reports stating Pacquiao was set to fight Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez, the reigning WBA/IBF featherweight king, in Las Vegas sometime next March.

The same reports said Pacquiao and his business manager, Rod Nazario, were all set to leave for the United States to sign a contract for the said event.

But quickly as news of that big championship bout came the chilling announcement from trainer Freddie Roach who has threatened to abandon Pacquiao.

***

Look, there's no denying that Pacquiao would've not been where he's now, on top of the world, if not for the dedicated handling and guidance provided by Roach.

Would Pacquiao be as superb inside the ring if Roach makes good his threat and skips working the corner in Manny's next big fight?

Maybe Mr. Nazario and his team of experts could make some adjustments.

But take it from one who has observed intimately the Roach-Pacquiao team-up.

Pacquiao will never be the same without Freddie Roach.

No, Pacquiao would not be exactly a kid lost in the woods without Roach there.

For one, Pacquiao is gifted with inborn fire and power in his fists.

He could be the hardest hitter in his division today.

But his total ability, not to mention his development, would be tremendously diminished if Roach abandons him.

Who knows? There could be worthy substitutes, although Roach is easily one of the best trainers in the world today.

But the thing to ask is whether the chemistry perfected under Roach could be provided by a new Pacquiao trainer.

***

By the way, it was the nosy veteran broadcaster Ronnie Nathanielsz who last week broke news of Roach's displeasure.

Nathanielsz reported in the Manila Standard that Roach was disgusted and angry over how Pacquiao was being defrauded by Murad Muhammad, his US promoter.

Nathanielsz said Roach, in a phone interview, called Muhammad a thief.

The highly respected American trainer threatened to quit Team Pacquiao if Nazario continues to deal with Murad.

"It doesn't make sense fighting the best guy in the division who is not even well known in the US," Nathanielsz quoted Roach as saying.

Roach, according to the report, said he could not understand why Nazario, despite his advice, was prepared to negotiate with HBO along with Murad, for a Marquez fight.

"Why should Pacquiao even go to HBO with Nazario and Murad for $800,000 when we can get him $1.5 million for a fight with Johnny Tapia," Roach was also quoted as saying.

Roach also bared that Pacquiao's last fight against Barrera was a $2-million package but Pacquiao received only $350,000 when his actual purse was $700,000.

Roach said he could work for a Pacquiao-Tapia fight in Manila, to be covered possibly by Showtime.

He said Pacquiao could also opt to give Barrera a rematch, and this could also be held in Manila.

Roach said he has lawyers working (for free) to nail Murad for a breach of contract over failure to abide by the "full disclosure" clause and several other violations of the Muhammad Ali Reform Act.

The question is: Should they stop cheating Manny Pacquiao, a priceless national treasure?

OLYMPIC QUALIFYING

Tañamor leads RP challenge

By Dennis U. Eroa

NO LESS than 24 slots for the 2004 Athens Olympics will be at stake when the Philippines hosts the 22nd Asian Boxing First Olympic Qualifying tournament from Jan. 10-18 at the Puerto Princesa City Coliseum.

Some 25 countries from Asia will vie for prestigious berths from 11 weight division even as the country fields in nine of its crack boxing team led by lone Vietnam Southeast Asian Games gold winner Harry Tañamor.

Honored

"Palawan and Puerto Princesa are honored to play a major part in the country's search for its first Olympic gold. We are confident that a Filipino qualifier from our home will go on to triumph in Athens," said Palawan Gov. Joel T. Reyes and Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn.

Both political bigwigs promised of a memorable and successful qualifying.

"No stones will be left unturned to make this event a big success," said Governor Reyes and Mayor Hagedorn. "We welcome our foreign friends with open arms and pray for the success of the Philippine team."

Joining Tañamor, a lightflyweight to the team selected by the Abap national coaching staff headed by Gregorio Caliwan, Boy Velasco and Pat Gaspi, are flyweight Violito Payla ,Sydney Olympian and bantamweight Arlan Lerio, featherweight Junard Ladon, lightweight Florencio Ferrer, lightwelterweight Mark Jason Melligen, welterweight Francis Joven, middleweight Chris Camat, and light heavyweight Maraon Golez.

"I express confidence that our boys will not frustrate local hopes. The field is quite strong, but we are coming in ready and determined to go to Athens," said Abap president Manny Lopez.

Lopez thanked Governor Reyes and Mayor Hagedorn for their tremendous support in ensuring the success of the tournament, easily the country's biggest for 2004.

The Filipino pugs are hoping to even up matters with the fearsome Thailand boxing team, which shone in Vietnam. Aside from Vietnam, other teams favored are Korea, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Japan and Mongolia.

38 slots

The Puerto Princesa event is the first of three qualifyings in store for Asia next year. China and Pakistan will later host the remaining qualifying where 38 more slots are up for grabs.

The country won two Olympic silver medals courtesy of boxing —Mansueto Velasco (1996 Atlanta) and Anthony Villanueva (1964 Tokyo).

TAÑAMOR (right) in action during the recent Vietnam SEA Games AFP

RACING TIPS

AT SLLP BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Aim for Gold 2. Respect the Ace 3. Amazing Red
Race 2—1. Transparent 2. Best in Class 3. Magiliw 4. The Virginian
Race 3—1. Hezabellagio 2. Courage Heart 3. Slew's Pleasure
Race 4—1. Longshot Tony 2. Shining Jo/Secret Quest 3. Something Best
Race 5—1. Aeyu's Glory 2. He's So Lucky 3. Fashion Victim 4. Nagmamahal 5. Sweet Serenade
Race 6—1. Cosanne 2. All for Glory
Race 7—1. Stunning 2. Red Rose 3. Captain Stone 4. Fair Go 5. Cue Artist
Race 8—1. Zero Gravity 2. Arbiter 3. Boogie Shoes
Race 9—1. Ann's Magic 2. Doña Gelay 3. Desert Deb 4. Schumacher 5. E-Mail 6. Lady In Red
Race 10—1. Surprise Target 2. Hyperbid 3. Sharon's Cookie/Ginger Candy 4. Suonos
Race 11—1. Morning After 2. Assunta de Rio 3. Early Warning 4. Beatitudes 5. Mighty Duds
Race 12—1. Rumaragasa 2. Crystal City 3. Alexis Magic
Race 13—1. Habagat 2. St. Emilion 3. Señor Presidente 4. Spirited Lady 5. Sir Olizon 6. Top Dancer

Jockeys refuse to ride over late payments

PHILADELPHIA—Jockeys refused to ride Monday at Philadelphia Park in a dispute over payment delays the track blamed on the state's stricter rules for drug testing of horses.

The test results used to take no more than three days, but now take up to eight, holding up payouts that range from $40 for a losing mount to $40,000 to the winner of the annual Pennsylvania Derby, a track official said.

"The riders think they should be getting paid before the results are back," said Hal Handle, chief executive officer of Philadelphia Park.

According to Handle, the cancellation of Monday's 10-race card cost the park its approximately $70,000 take on $350,000 in expected bets and an estimated $50,000 in loss simulcast payments.

About 25 jockeys race at the park on a typical day, officials said.

The president of the 1,130-member Jockeys Guild called the delays illegal.

"You cannot hold up the payments of a worker or an employee over a dispute that is irrelevant to them," Wayne Gertmenian said.

Track officials contend the jockeys are not track employees.

"We actually act as a payroll service . . . so what they're asking us to do is to front that money," said Joe Wilson, the track's vice president of operations. *AP*

Double standard

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

THERE is no question that PBA Commissioner Noli Eala is hardworking and resilient, but fair and reasonable he is not. The record will speak for itself.

For instance, in the just ended season of the Philippine Basketball Association, Eala not only punished Red Bull point guard Jimwell Torion too harshly, but he also deferred his decision on the appeal of a repentant Torion for the coming year, thus effectively prolonging the agony of the poor player whose only source of livelihood is playing basketball.

The sole breadwinner in a family of five, Torion was suspended for eight months and fined P70,000 for committing a hard foul that broke the nose of Talk 'N Text Jimmy Alapag last November. As a result of the long suspension and hefty fine, Torion had pleaded for forgiveness and understanding, but Eala virtually ignored the appeal by deferring his decision until the new year.

"I find the decision very unfair not only to Jimwell but to the entire Red Bull management as well," said frustrated team manager Tony Chua, who also pointed out that the penalties were too harsh compared with the "light" penalties meted out on San Miguel Beer's Danny Ildefonso who was slapped a mere one-game suspension and fined P30,000 for intentionally punching Coca-Cola import Tee McClary in Game 2 of their best-of-seven title series which the Coke Tigers won.

For his part, Eala stressed he needed time to review the case. "I don't want to rush this one because I'm studying it carefully."

That Eala should punish Torion is not being questioned, but the commissioner should treat Torion more kindly to show to the people that there is justice and compassion in the league. Torion's eight-month ban and P70,000 fine were the longest and biggest ever in the 29-history of the PBA. Before that, Rudy "The Destroyer" Distrito of Sunkist held the longest suspension period when he was banned for four months by then PBA Commissioner Jun Bernardino for committing a deliberate foul on Jeffrey Cariaso, then with Alaska Milk, in 1995.

Bernardino also suspended for three games and fined P40,000—then the biggest—Formula Shell's Jay Mendoza for starting a free-for-all after he intentionally elbowed Ginebra's Wilmer Ong on the head. Maynard Ballecer, the referee who was closest to Mendoza and Ong when the fight started, was sacked for two games, while the two other arbiters—Ernie de Leon and Jun Lansang—were suspended for one game each for not being able to be "always on top of the situation."

And speaking of the referees, Eala should also address this persistent problem of biased officiating in the PBA because this is one reason why the fans no longer show much interest in the league. If Eala wants to save the PBA from falling apart, he should punish those referees who are robbing the public blind with their one-sided officiating. I need not say more.

Happy New Year!

***

A PRINCE AMONG PRINCES. My longtime friend and *kabayan*, lawyer Pete Principe, deserves a toast for being named the "Most Outstanding IBP (Integrated Bar of the Philippines) Chapter President in the Philippines for the year 2001-2003."

Supreme Court Justice Hilario Davide Jr. presented the IBP award to Principe, known for his crusade against violence and injustice, during a solemn ceremony attended by a big crowd of more than 3,500 at the Valencia Hall of the Bulacan State University in Malolos City. The IBP board, headed by national president Jose Anselmo Cadiz, cited Principe for his achievements as president of the IBP Bulacan Chapter, including his efforts which led to the founding of the BSU Marcelo H. del Pilar College of Law.

In a message, President Macapagal-Arroyo also cited Principe for devoting his time for promoting justice especially to the less-privileged and the oppressed.

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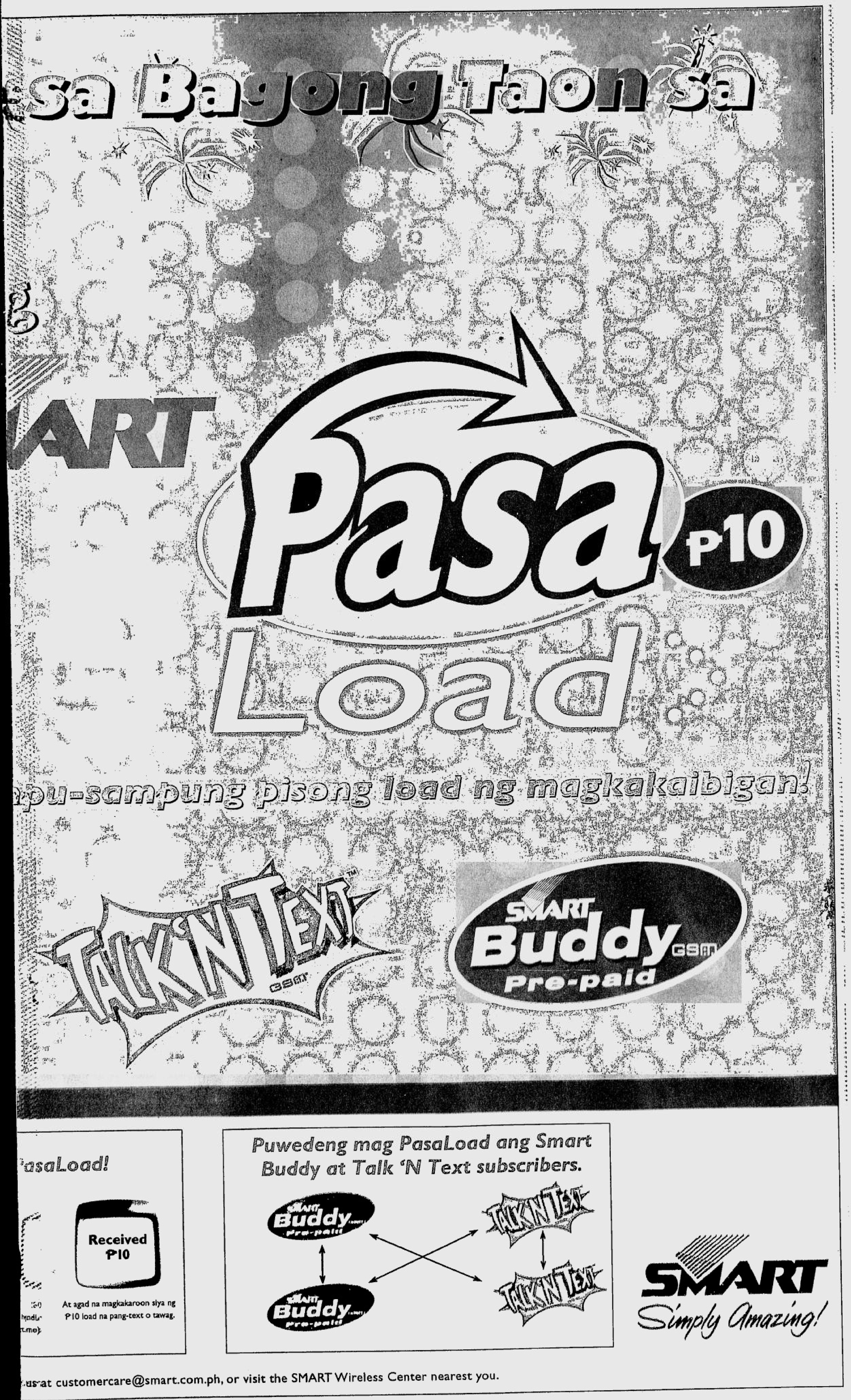
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'Filipinas' relevant but not preachy

From page A25

the tradition of purposive theater of the 1970s, the film addresses issues beyond personal drama and makes the members of the family representative of political positions currently at work in society at large.

Only a director with Lamangan's background in the activist theater in Martial Law years and cinematic craftsmanship acquired through sustained experience in the industry would have the daring and the vision to undertake such a risky project as "Filipinas," that could very well drag him down in the estimate of profit-conscious Filipino film producers.

With its multiple plots, the movie could have sprawled in many directions, and the diversity of the talents featured in each story could have allowed many irrelevancies to slip through the director's control. Lamangan has proved himself equal to the challenge of his material and cinematic form, and we are made aware in no uncertain terms that we have in him an artist who has earned the right to stand on his own, no longer simply a Brocka wannabe that was his image when he began making serious movies like "The Flor Contemplacion Story," "Death Row" and "Hubog."

Domestic explosion

Yolanda is the central sensibility of the narrative, drawing the various strands of the story of the Filipinas family into a tight unity. She is the archetypal dependable old maid of the family who has sacrificed her youthful days nursing an ailing mother. Samuel the eldest having migrated to the US with his family, Yolanda finds herself charged with the responsibility of keeping the family intact.

All the siblings have a life of their own except Yolanda. As a young woman, she was in love with a youth from the lower classes but she had to give him up. In the aftermath of a violent incident that would have endangered Samuel's getting a visa for the US, the boyfriend found himself taking the rap and going to jail, when the family insisted that Yolanda suppress the truth about her lover's innocence.

Although it is Gloria who has a degree in nursing, it is Yolanda who has to nurse Florencia, because Gloria has taken a job as a care-giver in Israel. And when Samuel and his wife go to the US, leaving behind a sickly daughter, Kathlyn (Sarah Geronimo), again it is Yolanda who plays mother to the girl. And now that the businesswoman of the family (Melendez) is getting married to her Indian boyfriend (Raymond Bagatsing), the economic burden weighs heavily on Yolanda's shoulder, for the two other males in the family are in the service of causes larger than family—one (Narciso) in the military and the other (Emman) in the labor movement.

In the season of Christmas, when the family gathers for a reunion, a domestic explosion is bound to break out, with Yolanda confronting her siblings with their sins of. commission and omission.

Deserving performance

As Yolanda, Maricel Soriano has taken on a role carefully drawn by a sensitive scriptwriter and molded by an expert director, and she makes the complexities and the nuances of characterization work for her as an actress, delivering a performance that fully deserves recognition for its power and insight. To be sure, she gets excellent support from the actors playing her brothers and sisters (notably Gomez, Neri, Zulueta, Ramos and Melendez), the rapport building up in a series of confrontations that is quite mesmerizing.

NATION AS FAMILY. Although the mother (Siguion-Reyna, with "daughters" Melendez, above left, and Zulueta) heads the Filipinas family, it is daughter Yolanda (Soriano) that keeps it together.

Viva Films has not spared anything to give "Filipinas" superior production values. Cinematography by Rolly Manuel, editing by Marya Ignacio, and musical scoring by Jesse Lucas have been most responsive to the intentions of the director, giving audiences a film memorable for going beyond gripping the emotions toward engaging their minds on issues confronting Philippine society today.

As an allegory testing the foundations on which our society stands at present, "Filipinas" has distinguished antecedents in Philippine theater and filmmaking. Gerardo de Leon's "Noli Me Tangere" and "El Filibusterismo" in film and Aurelio Tolentino's "Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas" and Severino Reyes' "Walang Sugat" in theater readily come to mind. What distinguishes Lamangan's movie is its timeliness and unapologetic advocacy for a nationalist view of contemporary Philippine society. At the same time that we follow the situations within the Filipinas family, we are asked to face up to the realities of the anti-Bush protests, the rumblings of rebellion within the military, the depredations on the national economy by global capitalism, the OFW phenomenon of Filipino professionals taking menial jobs abroad, and the rankling of resentments over remnants of feudal values and practices even among families that have been liberalized by modern education like the Filipinas family.

Colonial vestiges

At the conclusion of "Filipinas," Florencia is rendered comatose by a bad fall when her remaining sons exchanged blows over matters of principles after the death of Narciso in Mindanao. Samuel as a name for the eldest Filipinas suggests the vestiges of the colonial and feudal values in the family while Emman memorializes a young poet-turned NPA warrior as a liberative force. It is uncertain how long Florencia will remain alive.

Yolanda, symbolic of the citizenry that made personal sacrifices for the country in hopes of keeping the country in shape but felt betrayed and unappreciated by our leaders, vents on the Filipinas her grievances and resentments that have made her a passive, even impassive, member of the family. When a group of military men call on the Filipinas to make inquiries about Narciso's complaints about the armed forces, Yolanda wrathfully turns them away without answering their questions, in her defiance uniting herself with Emman who, at this point, has joined the guerrillas in the countryside.

Indeed, Lamangan's MMFF movie is testing the festival's announced bias for films that seek to make the film industry a partner in the building of the nation.

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Pro-accident, shellfish love and other boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: How would you describe your family?

Guest: They're pro-accident.

Host: What do you mean, pro-accident?

Guest: *Mga* pro-accident *sila* because *sila ang linalapitan ng gulo*!

(Ah, so . . .)

***

Host: Did you go to college?

Guest: Yes.

Host: *Ano'ng* grade?

(Hmmm . . . did *you* go to college?)

***

Host: Tell us about the lives of Filipinos living in the Middle East.

Guest: Well, for example, in Jordan, going to church is a pastime of Filipinos living there.

(And hearing Mass is a hobby?)

***

Host: How would you define love?

Guest: Love is *basta hindi* shellfish.

(*At hindi* crabby!)

***

Host: How did you come up with this special gown that has won an award?

Guest: Oh, it was really a tedious conceptualation of this very special gown to win a prize!

(*Ay*, conceptualation!)

***

Host: I hear that our birthday celebrant today is your best friend?

Guest: I think so.

Host: As his best friend, what is your inside into his personality?

(My friend, the insider!)

***

Host: What do you promise to do if you are voted into office?

Guest: I will zero the problems of the country!

(*Ganoon?*)

***

Host: Tell us about your latest film?

Guest: It's so beautiful and powerful, I'm glad I dood it!

(No, he isn't Doods Manzano!)

***

Host: This bedroom has dark-colored walls. How can we solve this in interior design problem?

Guest: We should replace the dark color with something more congenayal!

(Congenayal? Oh, congenial!)

***

Host: Do you want to greet anybody here in Manila, from your home there in the States?

Guest (via long distance): Merry Christmas to all—especially to my brother, who's an I don't know there in Manila!

(What does that make you, an I don't care?)

***

Host: Why do you think tourists like coming here, instead of someplace else in Asia?

Guest: Very attractive is the sunset, it's unique here. Tourists go to our sunset, sunrise, and look at!

(Ah, please repeat?)

***

Host: How do you size up Filipino voters—have they matured?

Guest: I think so. I think they are more aware lots of now!

(We hope you're lots of right!)

***

Host: Where did you take your friend in Australia?

Guest: All over, *inikot talaga namin siya*!

Host: *'Di ba siya nahilo?*

(Good question!)

'Buffalo Soldiers'

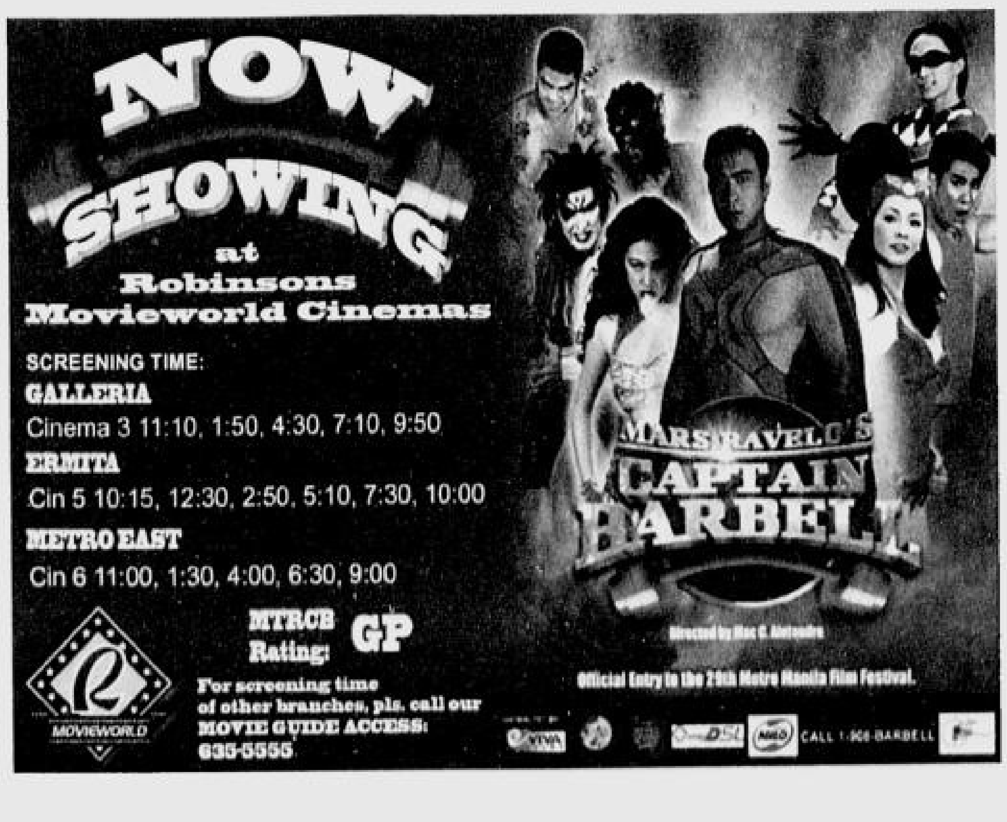
GREGOR Jordan's "Buffalo Soldiers" is an edgy satire on the military. It zeroes in on our American soldiers fighting nothing but boredom in Germany in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall came down, marking the end of the cold war.

At the heart of the film is a supply clerk who has managed to turn his lowly position into a burgeoning career stealing and selling arms and military supplies, and dealing drugs. He does this under the clueless nose of his inept base commander, whose only fault is having a good heart.

But all good things come to an end, and a new top sergeant is sent to the base to clean it up. He sets his eye on the supply clerk, whom he suspects to be a thief. The clerk, in turn, sets his sights on the sergeant's rebellious daughter. And so, to war!

"Buffalo Soldiers" stars **Joaquin Phoenix** as the larcenous supply clerk, and **Ed Harris** as the base commander.

(Have a happy, prosperous, safe and holy New Year, everyone!)



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Memories of Miko . . .

From page A25

Sen. Tito Sotto. And then he and the senator broke the sad news to Maru. The brothers all took the first flight back to Manila.

Miko's mother, Ali Sotto, was inconsolable at her son's wake. The other young Sottos, led by the senator's actress daughter Ciara, were also in pieces.

The sadness deepened as Miko's girlfriend, teen star Angel Locsin, arrived at the wake at about 10 p.m., clutching one Lacoste shoe that belonged to Miko. Angel was accompanied by Vic, Danica and Oyo Boy.

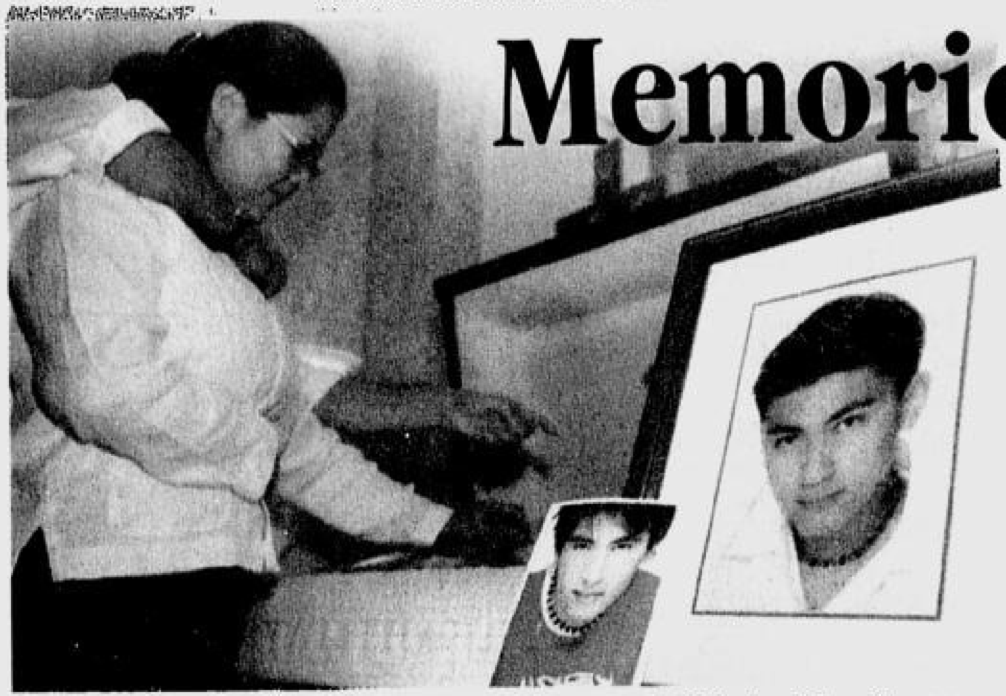
Miko and his brother Chino are the children of Maru and Ali, who is now married to a Pakistani diplomat. Chino is expected to arrive from the United States today for Miko's burial on Friday, Jan. 2, at the Loyola Memorial Park in Parañaque City.

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Louie C. Camino**

Memories of Miko, and a shoe



PHOTOGRAPHS & REMEMBRANCES are all that Ali Sotto (with husband) has of her son Marcelino Antonio Sotto III.

RANDY HORMILLOSA

By Jocelyn Valle
Contributor

MIKO Sotto's father blamed himself because he was the one who had bought the 9th floor condo unit in Mandaluyong City, from which the 21-year-old actor had fallen to his death early Monday morning.

Miko's mother was inconsolable, at the young man's wake Monday night at the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati City.

So was Miko's girlfriend, who came to the wake bearing half of a pair of Miko's shoes that he had left her.

"*Masama ang loob niya*," Miko's uncle, comedian Vic Sotto, said of Maru Sotto, his older brother who is the young actor's father. "He was the one who had bought Miko's condominium unit for him. I told him that maybe Miko was meant to live only so long. Then he told me that it could be the reason why Miko was in such a hurry. He wanted to do a lot of things. It turned out that he would have a short life."

Vic ruled out foul play and alcohol as the causes of Miko's death.

"It was a freak accident that could happen to anybody," Vic said. "Only, it happened to Miko."

He said he would always remember Miko as the protector of children, particularly Vic's daughter Danica and son Oyo Boy, his children with ex-wife Dina Bonnevie.

"He's very strong," Vic said of Oyo Boy, who was with Miko and two other companions at the time of the accident. "When I saw (Oyo Boy) him at the morgue, I just hugged him. I know he was feeling very bad about it."

Vic recalled that he had just dozed off in Cebu when he got a frantic call from Danica early Monday morning. "She was crying," he said of his daughter. "I couldn't understand what she was saying. And then my mind turned blank. I just sat in bed for five minutes. I felt so helpless."

His heart sank further when he realized that Maru was just in the next room. Vic first talked to their brother,

MEMORIES/ A24

'Filipinas' relevant without being preachy

By Bien Lumbera
Contributor

REVIEW

"FILIPINAS," Viva Films' entry for the Metro Manila Film Festival, is Joel Lamangan's dramatic narrative about a disintegrating contemporary Filipino family that leaves no doubt that the director has intended it to be read as also the state of the Filipino nation as it is wracked today by economic difficulties, political squabbling and moral contradictions.

The domestic drama and its allegorical implications have been so intricately interwoven by Roy Iglesias' screenplay that even as one is emotionally caught up in the dramatic confrontations within the family, one is effortlessly made aware of their social and political references. The outcome is that rarity in the local film industry—a "relevant" film that spares us from preachiness but frankly alludes to vital issues of the day, indeed a truly cinematic rendition of its multi-faceted social content.

Lamangan and Iglesias tell us about a provincial upper-middle class family ruled by an ailing matriarch (Armida Siguion-Reyna as Florencia) with six children in disparate occupations and situations: an accountant employed in the US (Richard Gomez as Samuel), an idealistic soldier seeking reforms within the military (Wendell Ramos as Narciso), an activist in full-time dedication to the labor movement's aspirations for social justice and liberation (Victor Neri as Emman), a nurse employed in Israel as a caregiver (Dawn Zulueta as Gloria), a trader engaged in the family's agribusiness (Aiko Melendez as Vicky). Holding the family together is a home economics graduate (Maricel Soriano as Yolanda) serving as a nurse to her mother and surrogate mother to a niece.

Risky project

The script provides each member of the family with a sub-plot, and the interplay of the various plots unfolds a narrative of ideals, aspirations, frustrations and resentments that mirrors the national situation in our time. In

'FILIPINAS'/ A24

MTRCB RATING ▶PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

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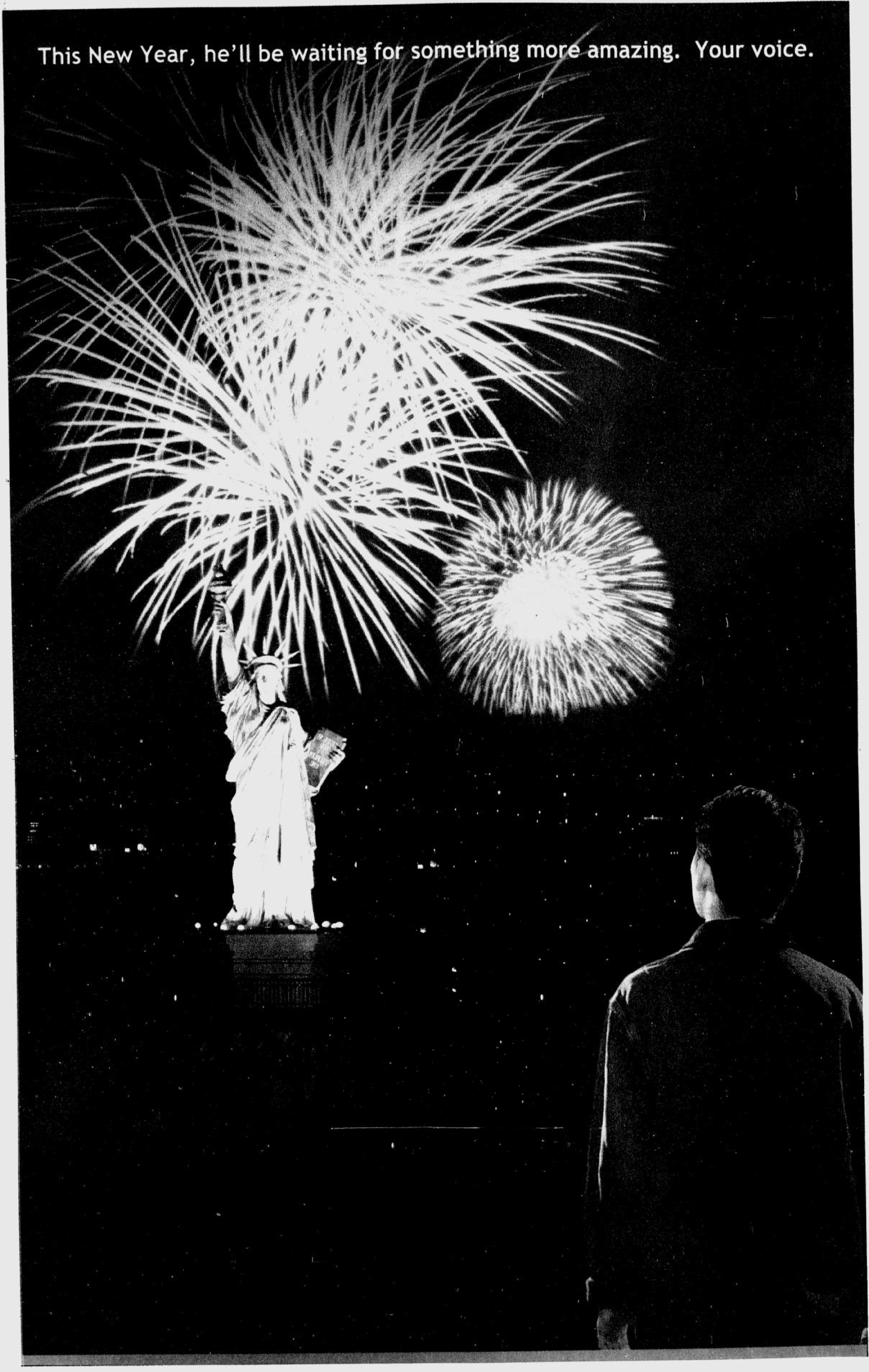
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Manufacturing output down 4%

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S top 500 manufacturers saw a 4-percent decline in volume of production in October from a year ago, marking the second straight month of contraction following a continued caution in building up inventory.

In September, manufacturing volume likewise dipped by 3.2 percent, reversing a two-month upturn since July.

Analysts maintained that the slump in the output of these top producers was partly due to the weakening of the peso against the US dollar which pushed up the cost of importing raw materials and intermediate goods.

The contraction in the October manufacturing volume was brought by the year-on-year decline in the production of leather products, tobacco, footwear and wearing apparel, non-metallic mineral products, paper and paper products, chemical and fabricated metal products.

Caution among producers was likewise seen as domestic demand was still perceived as relatively weak despite the Christmas season and also because of lingering domestic uncertainties.

The production data, which are based on the monthly integrated survey of selected industries by the National Statistics Office, did not include the output of small and medium enterprises which likewise significantly contributed to domestic productivity.

Manufacturing, which accounts for roughly 70 percent of the country's industrial output and a quarter of the gross domestic product, is highly dependent on export performance. This year, the country's main exports--electronics such as semiconductors--have yet to benefit from the recovery in the global economy.

As such, the country's export receipts are projected to grow by only 2 percent this year from 9.5 percent in 2002.

Despite the sluggish performance of the top firms, however, the manufacturing sector was still seen to have grown by 5 percent for 2003, based on latest estimates from the National Economic and Development Authority.

For next year, the sector is seen to grow by 4.6 to 5.5 percent while the overall industry sector is projected to expand by 5 to 5.8 percent.

Meanwhile, manufacturing sales of the top producers expanded slightly by 1.1 percent in October year-on-year in volume terms from a 0.4 percent drop in September.

In value terms, manufacturing output in October rose 3.6 percent while sales expanded by 9.8 percent.

The average capacity utilization rate of the top manufacturing sector slightly improved to 78.9 percent from a revised 77.7 percent in September.

PBCom to raise capital by ₱3B by Jan. 15

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE THREE major shareholders of Philippine Bank of Communications have committed to infuse P3 billion in fresh capital on or before Jan. 15 and this will allow the bank to meet and even exceed the capital adequacy ratio prescribed by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said the infusion of fresh money into PBCom would raise its capital adequacy ratio to between 11 and 12 percent. He added that the capital inflow would accelerate the bank's rehabilitation program.

He said the shareholders' infusion has yet to be approved by the policy-making Monetary Board.

PBCom disclosed to the stock exchange the other day that "shareholders have agreed to subscribe to common shares through an exercise of warrants on or before Jan. 15."

Sources said it would involve the subscription of 30 million worth of new common shares at P100 each. The warrants or the right to purchase the common shares being offered within a specific period and at a given price would be given as a sweetener.

"The infusion of about P3 billion will strengthen its capital position and will bring its CAR to above the 10-percent that we require for all banks," said Reyes.

PBCom is controlled by the Nubla, Luy and Chung families.

Monetary authorities would only give its go-ahead after the bank has obtained the approval of the Securities and Exchange Commission for the revisions in its incorporation papers.

PBCom has to issue new common shares, which would increase the number of its board seats to 15 from the existing 12 seats. This would require an SEC approval.

PBCom has outstanding shares of 52 million out of an authorized capital stock of 145 million shares.

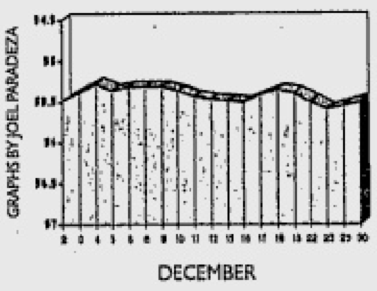
According to Reyes, the improved capital adequacy ratio would provide PBCom with a better financial muscle to "withstand shocks due to market developments" and allow it to face stiffer market competition.

Aside from the PBCom shareholders, the bank is counting on the support of the Filipino-Chinese community led by taipan Lucio Tan and the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

Tan had announced in late November that he would deposit P1 billion into the bank as a show of support.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



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₱55.50 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2003

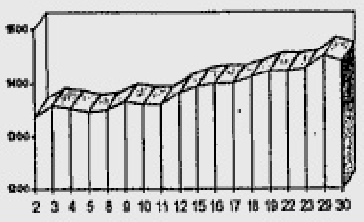
¥106.96 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2003

GOLD: $413.80-414.30
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 30, 2003

STOCK MARKET

Stocks end 2003 up 42%

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

LOCAL stocks yesterday succumbed to profit-taking after a creeping yearend rally, but fresh optimism for the new year remained as the main-share index ended 2003 with a 42-percent gain.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index lost 8.33 points yesterday to close at 1,442.37 before the market paused for another long holiday break.

Despite the slight drop in the Phisix yesterday, gainers still outnumbered losers 36 to 16, with 43 stocks unchanged.

The all-shares index was still up by 5.28 points at 874.78.

"There are still a lot of stocks which moved up due to window-dressing. Look at JG Summit (Holdings)," said Eagle Equities president Joseph Roxas.

For the full-year, however, AB Capital Securities analyst Jose Vistan said the 42-percent gain was a testament to how well the economy fared despite various local and global shocks.

Local stocks started out slow in 2003 amidt uncertainties over the Iraq war, the outbreak of the SARS killer virus and the global slump in the early part of the year.

Foreign funds likewise trickled back to the local bourse in the latter

STOCKS/ B2

Garments exports dip 3.68% to $2.63B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GARMENTS and Textile Export Board reported that as of Dec. 14, the country's garments export declined by 3.68 percent to $2.63 billion from $2.73 billion during the same period in 2002.

GTEB Executive Director Serafin Juliano earlier said the slowdown in garments exports was largely due to the decline in orders from the United States, the biggest export market for Philippine garments.

He said the lower value of exports to the United States was brought by the smaller quota given by Washington to garments shipments from the Philippine.

As of Dec. 14, year-to-date garments exports to the United States reached only $1.9 billion, which was 5.49 percent lower than the figure recorded during the same period last year.

The United States accounted for 73.83 percent of the local garment industry's total year-to-date garments exports.

Aside from exports to the United States, garments exports to Canada also went down by 5.78 percent to $64.29 million from $68.24 million in 2002.

Juliano said he was pleased to note, however, that garments exports to the European Union increased by 7.33 percent, reaching $346.47 million from $322.82 million last year.

He attributed the increase to the greater access to European markets.

But while the GTEB is optimistic the local garments industry will recover in 2004 from the slowdown, a labor group said more than 5,000 garment factory workers have lost their jobs since June 2003 due to factory closures.

The Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino was quoted as saying the retrenchment of 5,565 factory workers in the garments industry should be blamed on the onslaught of globalization.

In January 2005, the quota system for the garments sector will be lifted as mandated by the World Trade Organization. The quota-free regime means quantity restrictions currently imposed on the three biggest buyers of garments—the United States, the European Union, and Canada—will be removed, resulting in a free-for-all global market.

Some members of the industry fear that lifting the quota system in 2005 would adversely affect Philippine garments, which currently enjoyed one of the biggest quota allocations.

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PLDT plans 3rd call center unit, eyes British customers

By Abigail L. Ho

TAKING advantage of the continued boom of the call center industry, dominant carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. will put up its third call center within the first half of 2004.

PLDT senior vice president Rosalie Montenegro said in a news briefing Monday that the new call center would likely be operating by the end of the first quarter or the start of the second quarter next year.

"For the third call center, we're trying to get customers (from the United Kingdom). We're actually talking with them, but the holidays just got in the way. We're looking at setting it up in Parañaque because we already have a site there," she said.

Initially, she said the new call center would employ about 250 customer service representatives who would most likely handle calls for credit card companies.

Apart from setting up a new call center, she said PLDT was also eyeing a slice of the business process outsourcing (BPO) market, which the government wanted to attract.

BPO refers to a company's decision to subcontract some if not all important but non-core aspects of its operations to a third-party service provider. Business processes that can be outsourced include call center management, medical transcription, animation, and software development.

Armed with the fact that the country has an abundance of skilled labor, the Department of Trade and Industry has been promoting the Philippines as a BPO hub in the region for companies in North America and parts of Europe.

"We're trying to get a deal for BPO. The BPO market here is not fully established, except for the captive or in-house accounts. We're working on getting (clients) for BPO consultancies," Montenegro said.

She said talks were ongoing with two groups from the United Kingdom that wanted to set up shop here.

While generating additional revenues for PLDT, she said getting into BPO would also help the firm use call center facilities that were usually idle during mornings.

"We normally have just evening operations, so we can use the seats for BPO in the morning," she explained.

PLDT, through information technology arm ePLDT, currently has two call centers, both located in Metro Manila.

Parlance, a 522-seat call center in Makati, is devoted to servicing the customer support requirements of an American direct-to-home television service provider. In the first nine months of the year, it posted a net income of P46 million on revenues of P251 million.

Vocativ, which now has 720 seats from only 520 seats a few months earlier, has five American firms as clients. In the January-September period, it generated revenues of P214 million and a net income of P16 million.

Napocor sells $100M in bonds

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE CASH-STRAPPED National Power Corp. has sold $100 million in IOUs through a private placement as it starts funding its huge $1.2-$2 billion in foreign financing requirement for 2004.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong confirmed that the state-owned firm had issued the bonds but declined to give details. Sources said the bonds were sold to select institutional investors.

The ailing power company has yet to firm up its funding requirements for next year but government officials said it could hit a high of $2 billion especially if the sale of its transmission and generation assets would continue to be delayed.

The Energy Regulatory Commission had turned down the request of Napocor to increase electricity rates. The power firm's inability to raise tariffs would add about $300 million to its requirements, according to a government source.

Napocor said it would again tap the foreign markets by January to raise part of its funding needs.

The power firm would use proceeds of the foreign borrowing to finance its capital expenditures and repay maturing obligations in 2004.

But given the difficulty of the state-owned power firm to borrow for itself, the national government may end up raising most of its requirement.

Early this month, the central bank approved in principle a $40-million, 20-year loan of Napocor with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation. A Napocor loan of similar amount with the Asian Development Bank to finance the same project was approved earlier.

Any foreign loan of private companies exceeding $20 million has to be approved by the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board.

The $40-million (4.3 billion yen) long-term loan of Napocor with JBIC will help finance a $100-million project involving the establishment of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market and the upgrading of critical transmission lines. Of the $80-million foreign component of the Napocor project, half would be financed by JBIC and the balance by the ADB.

The creation of the wholesale spot market is deemed crucial to the ongoing reforms in the energy sector. The improved competition that the wholesale market would create should help bring down the cost of electricity in the Philippines, which has the third highest in the region.

RIC Castro (middle), a partner at the Quisimbing Torres law office, introduces Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza) Chair Lilia de Lima (left) to Christine Legarda (right), chair of the Global Executive Committee of Baker & McKenzie, during the 40th anniversary cocktail of Quisimbing Torres. Quisimbing Torres is an affiliate law office of Baker & McKenzie, considered as one of the top international law firms in the world.

Neda OKs additional work on Tiwi, Mak-Ban plants

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority has approved in principle the undertaking of additional work under the 6-billion-yen rehabilitation of the aging Tiwi and Makiling-Banahaw power plant complexes, the state-owned National Power Corp. said.

Napocor president Rogelio Murga said in an interview that the Neda has requested the power firm to review the costs that would be incurred on the expanded works.

"We are hoping to find ways to lower the expenses," he explained.

Company data showed that the Tiwi complex in Albay needed P806 million while Mak-Ban required P699 million in additional funding for the replacement of generator parts.

Last May, Napocor's maintenance manager for Mak-Ban Efren San Sebastian said that rehabilitation of the four generating units in Mak-Ban would take between June 30 and January 2004 to complete.

Back then, San Sebastian said that the Japan Bank for International Cooperation had approved additional work on the program, which meant that the turbines would be replaced with new ones instead of being merely repaired.

The official said this was decided since the extent of the needed repair required money that was good to buy new turbines.

With the replacement of the turbines all done by February 2005, the program would be practically total rehabilitation at least for the four units involved, San Sebastian added.

The Mak-Ban power complex has a total installed capacity of 425.73 MW—six units at 55 MW each, four units at 20 MW each and three binary units accounting for a combined 15.73 MW.

Philippine Geothermal Inc. had recently completed a $19.9-million (about P1 billion) deep-well drilling program aimed to bring up steam production in the Mak-Ban geothermal field.

PGI has been developing the Mak-Ban field since 1971.

PGI officials had said the resulting upgrade of four 55-MW generating units to a capacity of 63 MW each required a parallel effort to increase production of steam.

ABS-CBN expects banner year in '04

AGGRESSIVE marketing strategies, stronger advertising spending and the steady growth of its international operations bolstered ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.'s robust performance in 2003, which was also buoyed by the revenues generated from the introduction of Chinese telenovelas in its programming.

The broadcasting giant registered a net profit of P888.8 million for the first nine months of the year, a 1,260 percent improvement from last year's P65.4 million. Its third-quarter net income hit P381.8 million, up by 131 percent from the same period last year.

Following this accomplishment, a network official expressed confidence that 2004 would be another banner year for the network.

ABS-CBN's senior vice president for sales and marketing Nicanor Gabunada said the company's performance this year was largely due to its innovative marketing strategies and new programming initiatives that were also supported by the organizational restructuring, which began in the first quarter of 2002. Additionally, the media giant emerged in a better financial position with the introduction of new services that cut costs for its customers and added value to its media offers.

The company's strong rebound began in the first half of the year when it posted consecutive record-breaking P1 billion in airtime gross revenues on television starting from May to August. Gabunana added the sustained advertising confidence played a significant role in the upswing of the network's profit.

"Despite aggressive attempts of competitors to close in on the ratings game, ABS-CBN has maintained its top position not only in sales revenues but also in innovative programming," Gabunada said.

The network introduced in May the hit Taiwanese primetime television drama, "Meteor Garden," which raked in strong ratings for the network. Its competitors soon followed suit and also launched Chinese tele-dramas that eventually started the chinovela craze on local television.

Meanwhile, ABS-CBN started exporting its locally produced programs like soap operas, games shows and youth programs in the international market through its international sales and distribution.

With the continued expansion of ABS-CBN Global, whose subscribers grew to 176,830 worldwide, the company is banking on its international operations as a significant revenue driver in 2004. This subsidiary is expected to post a double-digit growth for the parent company, according to senior vice president for international operations Rene Encarnacion.

He said the net sales for ABS-CBN Global increased by 38 percent in 2002 to P1.92 billion due to the growth in subscriber base. Set to be launched next year is The Filipino Channel (TFC) in Milan, Italy, which is the base of operations of ABS-CBN in Europe. TFC will be commercially available via direct-to-home (DTH) satellite service.

Stocks end 2003 up 42%

From page B1

part of the year.

Roxas said that when trading resumes on Monday, activity would likely be slow but should pick up after the first week.

"The coming year may start off sluggish, as political jockeying will dictate the mood of the market in the first quarter. Already, the filing of Sen. Panfilo Lacson's candidacy and the commitment of popular newscaster and Sen. Noli de Castro to run as President Arroyo's running mate leave investors bewildered as to who has the best chance of winning in the 2004 elections," said ATR Kim Eng Securities.

Volume turnover improved yesterday to 885 million shares worth P660.64 million from 147.33 million shares worth P412.93 million on Monday.

The commercial-industrial index was down by 7.48 points at 2,185.23 while the property index shed 8.79 points to close at 571.35.

Mining was up by 4.19 points at 1,623.18; oil was down 0.02 points at 1.21 while banking and financial services shed 0.12 points to 439.07.

Market favorite Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) fell by P10 to P970 while Globe Telecom lost P5 to close at P860. *Doris C. Dumlao*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 30, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	10,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.75	17.25	17.75	186,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	47	47	46.5	46.5	673,200
Citystate Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	5,000
Equitable PCI Bank, Inc.	34.5	34.5	33.5	33.5	80,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.5	0.52	17,000,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	27.5	26.5	27.5	1,397,100
Philippine National Bank	24	24.25	24	24.25	13,100
Philippine Trust Co.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	1,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	20,300
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	17.25	16.5	17.25	173,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	27	27	26	26	11,200
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.4	43,000
First Abacus Financial	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.51	130,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1750	1750	1750	1750	780
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	62,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	200	200	200	200	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1350	1370	1350	1365	6,050
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25	25	25	25	21,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.7	1,080,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	865	865	845	860	67,400
Ipeople Inc.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.97	380,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.041	0.041	0.039	0.04	2,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	58,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.89	0.9	0.88	0.88	4,150,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	990	990	970	970	270,470
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	11,800,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15	15	14.75	15	920,600
Manila Electric Co. B	24.5	24.5	24.25	24.25	1,141,900
Petron Corp.	2.28	2.28	2.26	2.26	2,875,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.96	1	0.96	1	3,610,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.34	176,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	1,370,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	140,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.54	1.5	1.54	120,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	2,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	61,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.5	18.25	18.25	284,500
RFM Corp.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	40,000
San Miguel Corp. A	54.5	54.5	54	54.5	97,900
San Miguel Corp. B	64	64	63.5	64	146,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	1,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	60,000
Ayala Corp.	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.2	1,891,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	130,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	2,000,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	200,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.48	660,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	550,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.16	340,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	300,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	70,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	100,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.06	1.2	1.06	1.2	640,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	19	19	18.75	18.75	381,400
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	200,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	2	2.16	2	2.1	4,399,000
Medco Holdings	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	2,420,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	20,600,000
Music Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	700,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.14	740,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	200,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Cen Azucar de Tarlac	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	2,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	20,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.1	7.1	7	7	61,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.1	1.18	1.08	1.16	221,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	32	44	32	44	6,200
Pryce Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	400,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	223,500
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	2,440,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	470,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	50,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	7,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	25	25.5	24.75	25	322,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7.6	10.25	7.5	10.25	705,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.2	6	6.1	13,494,000
Araneta Properties Inc..	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	200,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	30,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.22	180,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.02	446,000
Highlands Prime, Inc.	2.18	2.2	2.18	2.2	350,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.155	0.17	0.155	0.17	400,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.1	2.6	2.1	2.6	1,345,000
SM Development Corp.	1.08	1.1	1.08	1.1	100,000
Sm Prime Holdings Inc.	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	1,478,000
Zipporah Rlty Hldgs Inc	-	-	-	-	-
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	2,000,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.8	36,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	2,630,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	3,490,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	57,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	10,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.4	0.42	0.4	0.41	1,400,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	220,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.0028	0.0028	527,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.003	0.003	165,000,000
Pacifica	0.008	0.009	0.009	0.009	2,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	500,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.17	0.175	0.17	0.175	210,000

DISCLOSURES

FIRST Abacus Financial Holdings Corp. explains that it is not aware or have any information that caused its share price to decrease by 40.0 percent from 0.50 to 0.30 per share on Dec. 29, 2003 trading.

* * *

DIGITAL Telecommunications Philippines Inc. confirms the statement of its CEO Lance Gokongwei to a Philippine Star news report entitled "Digitel sees P5.5-B revenues" published last Dec. 29, 2003.

* * *

IN a meeting held on Dec. 19, 2003, the board of directors of **International Container Terminal Services Inc.** (ICTSI) approved the conversion of advances of the company to its subsidiary International Container Terminal Holdings Inc .(ICTHI) into preferred redeemable shares the amount of P2,365,374,678. It also approved the conversion of advances of the company to ICTSI Warehousing Inc. (IWI) the amount of P1,090,791,876 into deposit for the future.

* * *

IN response to the news article published last Dec. 24, 2003 at the INQUIRER, the PNOC Exploration Corp. noted that PNOC-EC has indeed published an invitation to interested bidders to pre-qualify and submit sealed bids for the 49 percent of PNOC-EC's 10 percent participating interest in Service Contract No. 38. *Chona Galang, PDI Research*

CURRENCIES

December 30, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.800961	1.000000	55.569000
Japan	Yen	0.007478	0.009336	0.518800
United Kingdom	Pound	1.420024	1.772900	98.518300
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103186	0.128828	7.158800
Switzerland	Franc	0.640871	0.800128	44.462300
Canada	Dollar	0.611141	0.763009	42.399600
Singapore	Dollar	0.470655	0.587613	32.653100
Australia	Dollar	0.594317	0.742005	41.232500
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.124622	2.652590	147.401800
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.213590	0.266667	14.818400
Brunei	Dollar	0.469277	0.585892	32.557400
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020236	0.025265	1.404000
UAE	Dirham	0.218085	0.272279	15.130300
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.248500	69.377900
Argentina	Peso	0.271512	0.338983	18.836900
Brazil	Real	0.280155	0.349773	19.436500
Denmark	Kroner	0.134324	0.167704	9.319100
India	Rupee	0.017565	0.021930	1.218600
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.210807	0.263193	14.625400
Mexico	New Peso	0.071406	0.089150	4.954000
New Zealand	Dollar	0.519262	0.648298	36.025300
Norway	Kroner	0.118643	0.148126	8.231200
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013939	0.017403	0.967100
South Africa	Rand	0.119161	0.148772	8.267100
Korea	Won	0.000669	0.000835	0.046400
Sweden	Kroner	0.110101	0.137461	7.638600
Syria	Pound	0.018101	0.022599	1.255800
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023585	0.029446	1.636300
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000502	0.000627	0.034800

People, Events & Products

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Gold's Gym celebrates weeklong anniversary blowout

GOLD'S GYM Philippines recently celebrated its first anniversary with a weeklong celebration highlighted by daily celebrity workout classes and nightly blowouts to its members. Monday was an exclusive screening and lunch treat at the My Cinema at the Greenbelt 3. Officers of the Professional Models Association of the Philippines (PMAP) Isabel Roces, Phoem Berranda and Rachel Soriano attended the affair with other Gold's Gym members. That evening, featured celebrity trainer was Regine Tolentino doing the Jazz Tease.

Tuesday featured Ana Fegi and Champagne Morales for the Karaoke Spinning and that evening was a body show party for the ladies at the Temple Bar. Seen partying with DJ members Steve Mills and Paolo Cabalfin were Jon Hall, Antonette Taus, and Cheska Garcia.

Wednesday featured celebrity instructor Erika Fife with top breakdancer Art Strong leading the LA Hip Hop Class. Party Place that night was V Bar with the who's who in the modeling world. Thursday featured a special intro boxing class by the Philippine Boxing Team, then later a dinner treat at the Aubar in Greenbelt 3.

Friday featured Dyan Castillejo doing the skip fit class and a special aero dance class featuring Acoustic Jive providing live music for the aero class. Hollywood impersonators partied with members and invited guest POC Chair Cito Dayrit at the dinner and beer fest at the Venice Beach Café at Gold's Gym. Members then proceeded to the Hard Rock Café with a concert with the South Border. Saturday featured three special classes: Marc Nelson doing a special Ironman Class, Carlos Agassi with the Nautilus Nitro and Ivy Violan, Allona and Angelu de Leon for the Divas Spinning class.

Philips Consumer Electronics and Joey 92.3 made the weeklong anniversary blowout celebration possible. Pharmaton, Timex and San Mig Light also supported the event.

aboitiz
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SIGNING

ABOITIZ ONE, PLDT SIGN MOA

Abditiz One Inc and the Philippine Long Distance Company entered into a strategic partnership by signing an exclusive one-year contract for the nationwide distribution requirements of PLDT through Aboitiz's Distribute & Save (D&S). Present in the MOA signing were (seated, from left) Michelle Aboitiz, D&S AVP, Sabin Aboitiz, Aboitiz One CEO and president, Claro Carmelo Ramirez, PLDT senior VP-retail group, and lawyer Carol Henson, PLDT VP-support services sector.

SUN LIFE ADOPTS A HECTARE TO SAVE LA MESA WATERSHED

Sun Life Financial recently adopted a hectare of land for the 'Save La Mesa Watershed Project' implemented by ABS-CBN Foundation Inc, through its Bantay Kalikasan (Environment Watch) Program. Spearheaded by Sun Life Financial's 2003 staff consultative committee, this is the third consecutive year that the company has taken part in the reforestation of the La Mesa watershed, the main source of Metro Manila's potable water. Since 2001, Sun Life has adopted nearly 7 hectares of land, equivalent to almost 3,500 trees, to support this endeavor. Present during the MOA signing were, from left, Sun Life project coordinator Dorothy Cabrera, Sun Life human resources vice president Eduardo Salem, Bantay Kalikasan program director Mario Mendoza, Sun Life SVP for finance Ceasar Altarejos, Bantay Kalikasan Park Development consultant Jaime Jose Fernandez and Sun Life staff consultative committee vice chair Luisa Martinez.

SB Cards' P1-M promo ongoing

A LUCKY Security Bank MasterCard holder is on line to win a whopping P1 million cash credit come January 2004.

SBCards, the credit arm of Security Bank and issuer of MasterCard, has just launched its Win A Million, Spend A Million raffle. This means that until Jan. 31, a Security Bank MasterCard holder has a chance to start his or her New Year virtually as a millionaire.

"This is our way of offering our MasterCard holders a shot at the good life by giving them a chance to win P1 million shopping credits and, at the same time, chalk up P20,000 shopping credits from our monthly raffle draws," Jackie Papa, SBCards business development group head,. said.

How can an SB MastrCard holder join this promo?

Easy. One of either two ways: card application and card usage. First, all those who submit Security Bank MasterCard application forms, get approved, and activated within the promo period will be given a raffle number. SBCards will issue to a primary cardholder a raffle number for every enrolled and activated supplementary card.

Those interested may secure their application form from any Security Bank branch. After filling it up, you may either submit it at any Security Bank branch or mail it to SBCards Corp at 114 Valero Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City.

Usage means that a minimum of P500 purchase using a Security Bank MasterCard will-through a raffle number-qualify the cardholder to join the raffle.

For cardholders, there will be five monthly winners, also for six months, each romping off with P20,000 cash credits.

The first monthly draw was held Sept. 3, while the Grand Prize draw is scheduled on Feb. 16, 2004. The grand prize winner will be entitled to a cash credit of P100,000-for the next 10 months, for a total of P1 million in cash credits.

For inquiries, call 887-9177.

ProductFILES

A handy post-Christmas gift for her

IT'S NEVER too late to give your Holiday present to a loved one, even if Christmas has passed. Give your woman friend or loved one something they will truly adore and keep in the house-especially in the kitchen. It doesn't have to be very expensive, just a small kitchen appliance would make for a gorgeous gift that would they would find fulfillment while using.

Moulinex of France, a world-renowned brand, has a wide range of kitchen appliances such as blenders, food processors, chopper, mixers and juice extractors, which would complement her cooking skills. These premium quality gadgets are easy to use and functional as well.

Perfect for stirring up some Holiday spirits are the Q48 Blender, DIDA Chopper, Stand Mixer, and BKA1 Juice Extractor.

Exclusively distributed by Collins International Trading Corp, Moulinex products are available at all leading appliance and department stores nationwide.

Dr. Martens' special Christmas promos

DR. MARTENS, the brand that gave the world the best boots in terms of quality and design, gets revved up for the holidays with its not-to-be-missed Christmas promos.

Get an opportunity to up that fashion sense without putting down the budget as Dr. Martens gives some fabulous savings with discounts on Dr. Martens awesome footwear and sleek clothing line.

Give that old pair a much-needed Christmas break and baby those tired feet with some of that undeniable Dr. Martens flair. Avail yourself of the latest and trendiest Dr. Martens and enjoy a hefty P999 discount on all regular priced footwear starting at P4,595. Get the same old quality that comes with the Dr. Martens name without having to punish the wallet.

Of course, with all the Christmas parties going on, one doesn't want to go out and wear the same old thing time and time again. Dr. Martens has a prescription for those in need of fashion versatility with the Buy 2 Get 1 promo on all Dr. Martens shirts. Widen that collection of ensembles with the coolest and trendiest T-shirts from Dr. Martens.

Get more room for that Christmas shopping list and look good at the same time with these exciting promos from the one and only Dr. Martens.

MARITIME PARTNERS

United Philippine Lines Inc (UPL) chief operations officer Fernandino Lising (left) and Herald Maritime Services PVT LTD (HMS) managing director Capt. Rajendra Barve have initiated a partnership between the two companies, which will integrate resources and provide an Asian human resource solution to ship owners by the first quarter of 2004. UPL is one of the pioneers of shipping in the Philippines, with 44 years of experience in the industry. It is an ISO 9001:2000 certified company and a consistent POEA awardee for several years. HMS is a wholly owned Indian company with 13 years of experience in the shipping industry. In 1998, it was awarded the ISO 9002 certification and the Crew Manning Office Certificate by DNV.

Chevrolet Pasig opens

THE FIRST exclusive Chevrolet dealership in Metro Manila recently held its grand opening. Located along the C5 automotive row, Chevrolet Pasig carries vehicle models from sports utility vehicles like the Suburban, Tahoe and the 4x4 Silverado, the Venture Van, and the newly launched passenger car Optra, Aveo and the seven-seater Zafira.

"The state-of-the-art dealership is fully equipped with a wide-range of genuine parts and accessories for all the vehicle models that we carry. To ensure fast and efficient service maintenance, Chevrolet Pasig is equipped, too, with special service tools and equipments manned by highly professional, technically equipped and foreign trained service technicians. This, we believe, ensures customer satisfaction," says Chevrolet Pasig general manager Raul Evangelista.

Chevrolet Pasig spearheads the use of a dealership management system (DMS), a fully advanced computerized system used by successful dealerships worldwide. The DMS is an automotive management solution process, which keeps close track of each and every customer from vehicle sales to after sales.

"Our main objective is to create customers for life, and we do this by keeping our customers enthusiastic all throughout the car ownership. With DMS, this objective is easily met. Our efforts do not stop when the customer has bought the car. We make sure they have everything they need long after the purchase," Evangelista said.

Share a taste of Italianni's this season

SHARING as a way of life is a credo Italianni's takes to heart. This Holiday season, the restaurant allows its guests to spread this tradition by offering assorted baskets as Christmas presents for family and friends. These goodies are guaranteed to bring a smile (not to mention a full tummy) to everyone.

Family and friends will be delighted to start their meal the Italianni's way-with a serving of the restaurant's homemade Tuscan and Foccacia bread dipped in balsamic vinegar. That's the treat they will get plus a bottle of wine with Italianni's Bread and Wine Basket for P1,200 and P1,600.

Give them a bite of Italianni's New York-style Cheesecake that comes in delightful tartlets topped with different mouth-watering flavors (blueberry, strawberry, peach, assorted fruit and kiwi). This Assorted Cheesecake Tartlet Box is available for P750 per box of five tartlets.

Or you can give the Assorted Muffins Box. A dozen assorted flavors (blueberry, banana walnut, double chocolate, peach walnut, and strawberry) cost P450 only.

Other excellent gift choices are Italianni's gift certificates. Share the Italianni's dining experience anytime of the year. Choose from denominations of P250, P500 and P1,000. Visit Italianni's Restaurant at Greenbelt 2, Glorietta IV, Alabang Town Center and SM City Bicutan and bring these goodies home to your loved ones.

BOBSON NOW IN METROPOINT MALL

Bobson, the lifestyle product for today's diverse youth, expands anew with the opening of its 25th freestanding store located in Metropoint Mall, Edsa corner Taft. Celebrity female endorser, the stylish and beautiful Nancy Castiglione, graced the store opening-cum-blessing to give full support to Bobason's team, spearheaded by Victor Tan (3rd from right), president and CEO of Crolific Garments Manufacturing Corp, manufacturer of Bobson, together with (from left) Chiqui Gomez, officer-in-charge of Metropoint Mall, Rio Lambuson, marketing and business development manager, celebrity Greg Turvey, Chris Tiu, VP-sales, and Rhobi-zen Ignacio, operations and marketing assistant of Metropoint. Bobson offers cool, casual trendy jeans and bottoms, as well as fashionable tops and accessories that suit the lifestyle of the hip and discerning youth. Its products are available in 129 major department store outlets and freestanding stores in the metropolis and key provinces nationwide. Bobson also recently opened a freestanding store in Metro Pacific Mall in Lucena-its 26th boutique to date.

EK's park hours for January

ENCHANTED Kingdom announces its park schedule for January 2004.

Until Jan. 4, the park will be open from 10 a.m. to 12 midnight. Today, Dec. 31, however, it will be open until 7 p.m. only.

From Jan. 5 to 9, it will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., while on Jan. 10 and 11, park hours will be until 10 p.m.

Starting Jan. 12 to March 28, EK resumes its regular park schedule. It will be open five times a week as follows: Wednesdays to Fridays (10 a.m. to 7 p.m.) and Saturdays, Sundays and holidays (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.).

Shuttle service to and from the Park is available at the Ayala Center terminal at P100 per passenger (one way). For details, call 830-2111 to 16 or 843-6073 to 78, or visit www.enchantedkingdom.com.ph.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late ROSITO C. PRESENTACION was extrajudicially settled by the heirs as per Doc. No.1036, Page# 208, Book# XI Series of 2003 by Notary Public Federico de Jesus of Tabaco City.
(PDI- Dec. 17, 24 &31,2003)

NOTICE OF LOSS

NOTICE IS GIVEN THAT S2 CARD #17531N99 IN THE NAME OF MA. ESTRELLA IBE IS LOST (PDI-DEC 31 2003)

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that the DANGEROUS DRUG S-2 ID License# 11240R020951 of Dra. Ma. Cynthia B. Sanchez was lost.
(PDI- Dec. 31, 2003; Jan. 07 & 14, 2004)

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PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
A Subsidiary of Bases Conversion
Development Authority

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC) invites prospective bidders to apply for pre-qualification for the bidding of the **San Fernando Airport Runway Lights Development Project** under the Build-Transfer (BT) Scheme pursuant to R.A. 6957, as amended by R.A. 7718, otherwise known as the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Law, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

Interested Proponents are required to submit a Letter of Intent addressed to the Chairman, PPMC-Prequalification, Bids and Awards Committee (PBAC), Poro Point Management Corporation, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union.

Pre-qualification documents can be secured from the above address starting **January 12 through 14, 2004, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of ONE THOUSAND PESOS (P1,000.00) and after submission of above LOI.

The deadline of submission of the complete pre-qualification documents is exactly **3:00 p.m., February 10, 2004.** Prospective bidders shall present the original copies of documents or evidence for authentication purposes. Failure to comply with this requirement will be ground for disqualification.

The preparation, submission and evaluation of pre-qualification documents is governed by the provisions of the above BOT Law and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

PPMC reserves the right to reject any or all application for pre-qualification, waive any defect or infirmity therein, to accept the bid and to award the contract which is most advantageous to the Corporation.

For inquiries regarding the project, contact **Engr. Virgilio M. Salayog**, Head, Ports Management Division at Tel. No.: (072) 242-56-38.

(Sgd.) VICTOR G. FLORESCA
Chairman, PBAC

(PDI-Dec. 24, 31, 2003 & Jan. 7, 2004)

ERRATUM

PORTION OF THE ADS PUBLISHED ON DECEMBER 19 & 26, 2003 IN THIS NEWSPAPER SHOULD HAVE READ AS FOLLOWS:

SCHEDULE OF PRE-BIDDING AND BIDDING

Activity	Time, Date and Venue
Submission of Letter of Intent	January 05, 2004, PhilRice, Science City of Muñoz, N.E.
Issuance of Qualifications Forms	January 30, 2004, PhilRice, Science City of Muñoz, N.E.
Issuance of Bid Documents and Plans	At least one week before Pre-Bid Conference and Site Inspection
Pre-Bid Conference and Site Inspection	At least one week after Issuance of Bid Documents
Submission/Opening of Bids	At least one week after Pre-Bid Conference and Site Inspection

Qualification forms may be secured at the PhilRice BAC Secretariat upon payment of a non-refundable registration fee of Php 2,000.00. Only those issued qualification forms may be issued Bid Documents and Plans after paying a non-refundable fee of P5,000.00 to P10,000.00 depending on the cost of the project.

All particulars relative to the procurement of these projects shall be governed by the provisions of existing laws and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

For more information, please call the Infrastructure Unit, Physical Plant Division at Telephone Nos. 044-4560-285; 4560-258 local 522 or 528.

PhilRice reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, waive any defect found therein and to award the contract to the contractor whose bid is most advantageous to PhilRice. PhilRice does not guarantee award of contract under this announcement.

(Sgd.) LEOCADIO S. SEBASTIAN
Executive Director
Philippine Rice Research Institute
Maligaya, Science City of Muñoz, N.E.

(PDI - Dec 31 2003)

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OBITUARIES

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Death Notice

Eriberto Caranto

of Huntsville, Alabama

March 16, 1917 – December 7, 2003
Died in the Grace of our Lord at the age of 86.

He was a Filipino Scout in the Bataan Death March and was a POW from 1940 to 1941, served 32 years in the U.S. Army and worked for the civil service until 1989.

Survivors include his wife, Socorro Niverba Caranto; daughters, Milagros Rey of Southbend, Indiana, Gertrudes Euler of Knoxville, Tenn., Frances Gumienny of Smyrna, Ga., and Digna Caranto-Werber of Huntsville; sons, Romy Caranto of Amarillo, Texas, Rusty Caranto of Birmingham, and Daniel Caranto of San Antonio, Texas; 11 grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

"What You give, You do not take away ...
And death is only a horizon
And a horizon is nothing
save the limit of our sight."

In Loving Memory of

MA. LUISA ALBERT ATIENZA

December 13, 1946 – January 1, 1996

On her Eighth Death Anniversary

Her husband, Jacky and children, Marti and Charly and grandchild Nicky request relatives and friends to remember her in their prayers and to join them at the celebration of the Holy Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Chapel, Camp Gen. Rigoberto J. Atienza, Libis, Quezon City at 4:00 PM on Thursday, January 1, 2004.

The Holy Mass will also be offered at the following churches:

Sanctuario De San Jose	6:15 PM
Sacred Heart Parish Church	6:30 PM
Christ the King Parish	6:00 PM
Mary the Queen Parish	7:15 PM
St. John Bosco Parish	7:00 PM
Santa Maria della Strada Church	12:00 NN
Assumption Convent	8:00 AM
Our Lady of Montserrat Church	8:30 AM

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:6

MESSAGE OF THANKS

The family and relatives of the late

CONCHITA TAN

wish to convey our sincere gratitude to all those who comforted us with their presence, blessed us with their prayers, embraced us with their love, reminded us of God's love and faithfulness through flowers and messages, attended the funeral rites and in many immeasurable ways helped us during our time of bereavement.

We design OBITUARIES for free.

MELANIO D. HERNANDEZ, SR.

Died in the Grace of our Lord
on December 29, 2003 at the age of 81

His wife Milagros (+); bereaved children Grace, Melanio Jr. & Esperanza Salvador, Vittorio, Ricardo & Brenda Alcantara, Rossano & Ma. Teresita Buglos, Florence & Rene Molina; grandchildren Francisco, Jessica, Joel Clarence, Theodore James, Joseph, Benjamin Joseph, Tighe Federick (+) & Shaun Richard; brothers and sisters, and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Chapel 1-C, National Memorial Homes, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation will be at the Funeraria Paz Crematorium on January 3, 2004, 1:00 p.m. Requiem Mass will be at 11:00 a.m of January 3, 2004

A good wife and mother, caring for the home, faithful in love
for her husband, ever sweet & kind ... she is the gem
of our hearts.

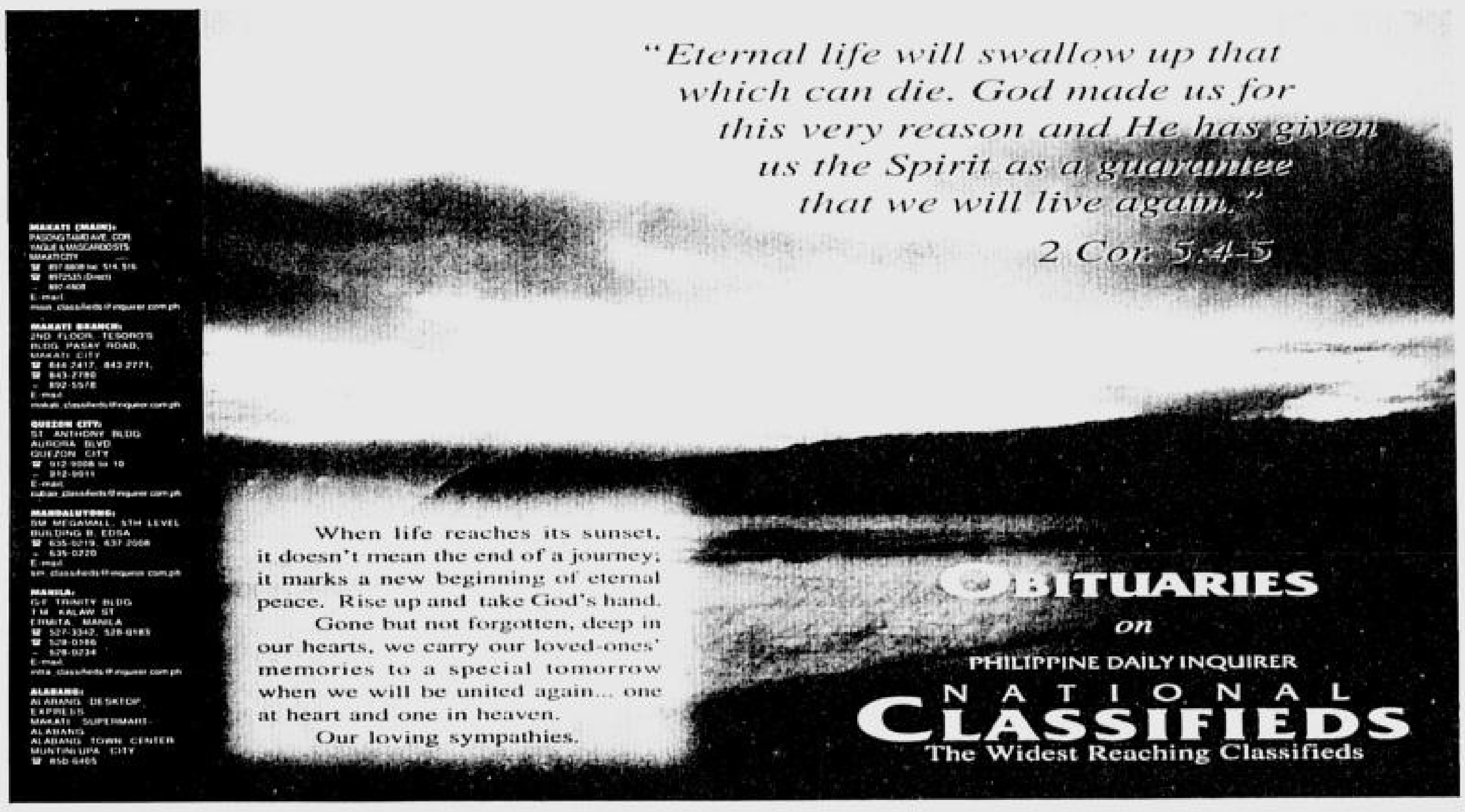
ANGELITA C. RODRIGUEZ

Peacefully died in the grace of our Lord
on December 29, 2003 at the age of 82.

She is survived by her husband **Mariano** and children **Mon** and **Cecile**, **Wimpit** and Estrella, **Tess** and Ernie, **Anna** and Eddie, **Loudette** and Tony, and **Marcia**; grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Her body lies in state at the National Shrine of the Sacred Heart on Dao St., Makati. Interment will take place on Friday, January 2, at the Loyola Memorial Park, Parañaque City, after the 9 a.m. Mass at the National Shrine of the Sacred Heart.

Her family requests the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.



"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again."
2 Cor. 5:4-5

When life reaches its sunset, it doesn't mean the end of a journey; it marks a new beginning of eternal peace. Rise up and take God's hand.

Gone but not forgotten, deep in our hearts, we carry our loved-ones' memories to a special tomorrow when we will be united again... one at heart and one in heaven.

Our loving sympathies.

OBITUARIES on PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER NATIONAL CLASSIFIEDS
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"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want... He gives me repose....
Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil
for You are at my side ..."
(Psalm 23)

A loving husband, a great father and a doting lolo

DEDIOS PRADO GERARDO

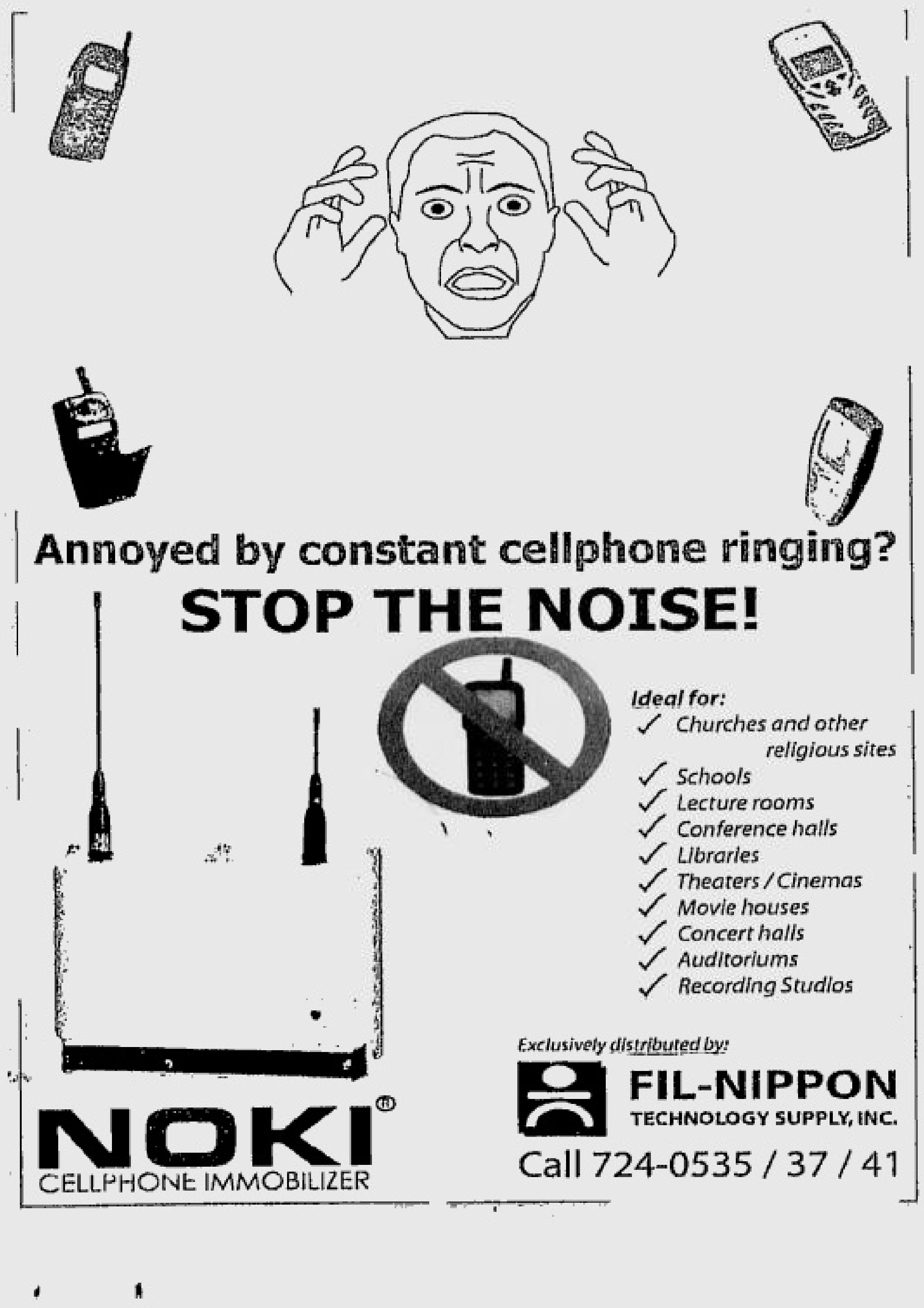
March 7, 1914 – December 29, 2003

His loving wife, **Josefina**; children **Judy** and **Tom**, **Jessie**, **Dennis** and **Mary Ann**, **Jane** and **Bong**; grandchildren **Timothy John**, **Maria Theresa Joy**, **Joseph** and **Denise Ann**

Relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at their family home at 175 Roxas Avenue, Kalibo, Aklan.

CLASSIFIEDS



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4	FILIPINAS
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2
7	MALIKMATA
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

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6	MALIKMATA
7	HOMECOMING
8	CRYING LADIES

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4	FILIPINAS
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES

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2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	MALIKMATA
4	MANO PO 2

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2	MALIKMATA
3	MANO PO 2
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MARILAO

1	MALIKMATA
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2

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5	FANTASTIC MAN
6	FANTASTIC MAN
7	MALIKMATA
8	HOMECOMING
9	FILIPINAS
10	MANO PO 2

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8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	MANO PO 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1	FANTASTIC MAN
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3	CRYING LADIES
4	MALIKMATA
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	FANTASTIC MAN
7	MANO PO 2
8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	MALIKMAFA
11	CRYING LADIES
12	FILIPINAS

SM CITY DAVAO
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4	MANO PO 2
5	FILIPINAS
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7	FANTASTIC MAN
8	CRYING LADIES
9	MALIKMATA
10	FANTASTIC MAN
11	CAPTAIN BARBELL
12	FILIPINAS

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	MANO PO 2

SM CITY ILOILO
3209432

1	MALIKMATA
2	RESERVED
3	FILIPINAS
4	FANTASTIC MAN
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2
7	RESERVED
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MANILA
5239340

1	FILIPINAS
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	HOMECOMING
8	FILIPINAS
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	FANTASTIC MAN
11	CRYING LADIES
12	MALIKMATA

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
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2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2

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4 MALIKMATA 10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00

2 MANO PO 2 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50

5 FANTASTIC MAN 10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50

3 CAPTAIN BARBELL 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00

6 FILIPINAS 10:20, 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00

7 CRYING LADIES 11:10, 1:45, 4:20, 6:55, 9:30

9 FILIPINAS 12:10, 2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:30

8 MALIKMATA 12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30

10 CRYING LADIES 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00, 12:00

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2 FANTASTIC MAN - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
3 FILIPINAS - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
4 MALIKMATA - 10:40, 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 9:30
5 CAPTAIN BARBEL - 10:15, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
6 HOMECOMING - 11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 10:00
7 CRYING LADIES - 12:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00

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Marcos hway
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2	HOMECOMING
3	MANO PO 2
4	FILIPINAS
5	CRYING LADIES
6	CAPTAIN BARBELL
7	FANTASTIC MAN
8	FILIPINAS

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1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	FILIPINAS
3	MALIKMATA
4	CRYING LADIES
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	MANO PO 2
7	HOMECOMING
8	MANO PO 2

Cainta
Brgy. Sto. Domingo Ortigas Extension

1	MALIKMATA
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	FANTASTIC MAN

Malabon
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1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	MALIKMATA
4	FILIPINAS

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FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
MALIKMATA	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CRYING LADIES	4	FANTASTIC MAN
CAPTAIN BARBELL	5	MALIKMATA

Dasmariñas		Imus (046)471-8188 / 875-5858
MANO PO 2	1	FANTASTIC MAN
HOMECOMING	2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	3	CRYING LADIES
CAPTAIN BARBELL	4	MANO PO 2
MALIKMATA	5	FILIPINAS
	6	HOMECOMING

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MANO PO 2	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
CAPTAIN BARBELL	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	4	FANTASTIC MAN
MALIKMATA	5	MALIKMATA
ELF	6	CRYING LADIES

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BOOTS ANSON ROA GINA PAREÑO
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Best Actor- Richard Gomez
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Best Supporting Actor- Victor Neri
Best Screenplay- Roy Iglesias

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pamilyang Pilipino!

Filipinas
Gabi ng Parangal
VIVA

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Captain Barbell, Darna at Lastikman
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Directed by: Mac C. Alejandre

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Ali 1	MANO PO 2
Ali 2	FILIPINAS
Ali 3	CAPTAIN BARBEL
Ali 4	CRYING LADIES
Ali 5	MALIKMATA
Ali 6	FANTASTIC MAN
Ali 7	HOMECOMING

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JAN 3	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
JAN 4	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
JAN 12	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
JAN 14	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
JAN 19	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2004

FOR TICKETS, CALL TICKETNET AT 911-5555

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY LEGEND OF [illegible]
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	MALIKMATA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	LIBERATED
B	AKO, IKAW, SIYA
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA-RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR. SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOOBS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PIÑAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	COLD CREEK MANOR
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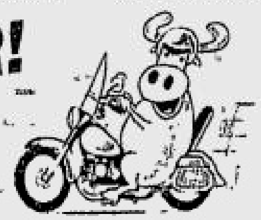

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4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 MALIKMATA		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 MALIKMATA	4 MALIKMATA
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4	MANO PO 2

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New Year's resolutions that can change your life

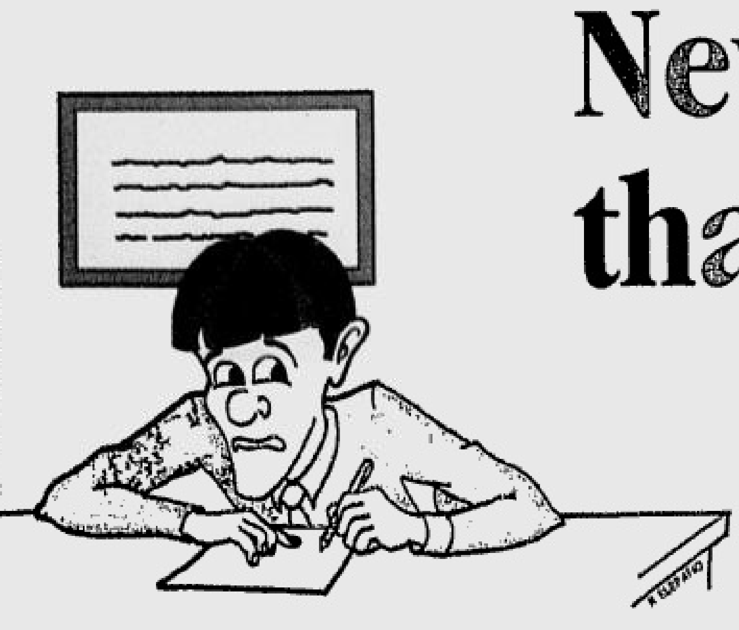


ILLUSTRATION BY RONNIE ELEFANO

By Ernie O. Cecilia, FPM

YEAR after year, we make New Year's resolutions to achieve the successes we long for. But sadly, the path to success is usually lined with insurmountable obstacles and our resolutions fall by the wayside. Do you feel that your road to success is littered with broken dreams and sad memories? Do you notice that a few successful people cross the finish line almost effortlessly? Do you wonder why most people pass through a rocky road while some walk on a neat carpet on the way to success?

Everybody wants to succeed. Some know how, others don't. Some people have clear paths to success. Others can't even figure out either the road or the direction. Some look inside themselves and see clearly what stands in the way. Others look outside and blame everybody else for the blocked path to success. On this score, I agree with Sheldon Kopp who remarked, "All significant battles are waged within the self."

Here are some New Year's resolutions that can clear your path to success:

1. "I will have a sense of purpose."

Many people seem to never know why they do what they do or what they really want to make out of their lives. It is as if they just found themselves in the middle of a traffic jam where everybody tries to inch his way forward. Where are we going to? Only God knows.

To those who don't know their destination, it doesn't matter what road they will take. To those who don't have a sense of purpose, it doesn't matter what they do or what they do it for. It matters less where what they do will take them. They just seem to keep going, wherever any road takes them.

If you want success, first have a sense of purpose. Have something significant to do now and in the future. For if you don't know where you want to go, it doesn't matter what road you take.

2. "I will have faith in myself."

No matter what you are, you have to believe in yourself. You have no choice—you're all you've got. When push comes to shove, you can't always depend on others. You'll have to do most of the living of your life—you can't delegate it to others.

When you establish a line of sight between what you are now and what you want to be, it is easier to pave the trail you have to take toward success. Believing in yourself helps you make the right steps. Poor self-esteem and lack of self-assuredness are great mental roadblocks that hinder your journey to success. If you don't believe in yourself, how can you expect others to believe in you?

3. "I will choose to make a difference."

Life is about making choices. Indecision, doubt and ambivalence tend to barricade your path to success. Most failures can be attributed to the inability of people to make a choice or decide. The underlying reason is usually the lack of belief either in one's vision or one's capacity to achieve that vision.

Once you have set sight on a goal, choices begin to unfold before your eyes—some will lead to your goal, others will lead you astray. Usually the choices leading to your goal are the more difficult to make because they require hard work, persistence and constancy of purpose. If you truly want to pursue your success, make a choice, make a move, make a difference.

4. "I will leave my comfort zone."

The road to success is not always a straight path. There are detours. In your career, sometimes you have to take a lateral move in lieu of a promotion. In business, you might need to put in more investments before dividends become visible. Your path to success will not always be comfortable for you. In fact, you have to leave your comfort zone and find yourself in uncharted territories. Sometimes, you can't have success unless you blaze new trails across barren land or murky waters.

Success comes to those who are willing to do things never done before. Sadly, only people who want success so bad are crazy enough to leave their comfort zone. Fortunately, the prize for giving up what you now have in your quest for greater success is usually a hundredfold.

5. "I will not stand in my way to success."

Many people live lives that are a never-ending obstacle course. The funny thing is that they never realize that the greatest obstacle is their own self. When people see how big their problem is, they become too small to face their problem. They forget that they are bigger than any of their problems.

When negativism sets in, your path gets blocked by doubts, fears and messages telling you that you won't succeed. Regardless of where these messages come from, you and only you will choose whether to entertain them or not. Therefore, whether external forces are blocking your path to success, you are still responsible for either acknowledging or ignoring and surmounting them. In the final analysis, only you can stand in your way to your success.

If life were a battle, the sooner we realize that the enemy is us, the better for us. Before we can conquer our real enemies, we have to conquer ourselves first. Before we can make others believe in us, we must first believe in ourselves.

By removing the cobwebs, dust and soot in our mind, we can truly clear the path to our success. Unfortunately, no janitorial agency has developed the expertise to do that for us—we just have to do it ourselves as we start a new year of endless possibilities.

(*Ernie Cecilia is the president and CEO of EC Business Solutions and Career Center, a business and human resource consulting firm. He was formerly the president of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines. Send feedback to* erniec@edsamail.com.ph.)

Local comic book creators fight foreign superheroes

By Candy G. Villanueva

ALL ABOUT WORK

IF DARNA were pitted against Wonder Woman, she probably would have a good fighting chance. Sadly, in the comic books stands, Darna and a group of other Pinoy comic book character underdogs don't stand a chance against the superheroes of D.C. Comics or Marvel Comics. The Philippines is home to dozens of talented comic book creators but unfortunately, the comics stands are dominated by foreign names. However, thanks to several brave and talented comic book creators, like Zach Yonzon, our local heroes are slowly taking charge of the comics battleground.

Zach Yonzon is editor in chief of Mango Comics, a new comic book company based in Tagaytay that recently released a new version of the Filipino classic, Darna. Yonzon is also one of the creators responsible for drawing and writing comic books or what they call sequential art.

Endangered art

Local comic books used to have a great following but due to the overwhelming rise of different forms of entertainment, our local comic book heroes nearly became part of the endangered species. Still, Yonzon believes that there is hope. "The readership of comics remains constant and, we believe, is slowly growing again. This is evidenced by the success of companies like Culture Crash, PSICOM, and Summit Publishing, who have great titles out on the shelves."

Aside from the marbles and the slingshots, comic books are a part of most growing kids. Many of these kids have grown up but have never outgrown their dog-eared comic books. It has become part of their lives (as attested to by countless adult comic book collectors) and their jobs. Zach, his dad and many other comic book creators are among this group. Yonzon enthuses, "My dad is publishing and writing comics! He buys comic books, or toys or DVDs of cartoons for research. A 54-year-old guy buying and writing comics is just the coolest thing."

Sources of inspiration

There is no such thing as a typical day for a comic book creator according to Yonzon. Most of it is spent lounging around waiting for the creative juices to flow. Lounging around could mean the mandatory caffeine fix at the coffee shop, watching DVDs (apparently the source of some ideas) and playing video games (another abundant source of inspiration). In between, when the inspiration hits, a creator would whip out his tools, a PowerBook in the case of Yonzon, and write or draw.

But for Yonzon, like most creators, the source of inspiration is a bit closer to home, his heart. "I'm pretty much driven by God and the person I adore."

Back at the studio, a comic book creator spends most of what's left of the day in front of the PC researching and doing correspondences via the Internet or solidifying ideas into works of art. If you think these creators have it easy, think again. Although the work pace may seem slow, sometimes they stay up till the wee hours of the morning to finish a project.

No formal school

With the great number of comic book aficionados, it is unfortunate that the comic book industry is not recognized in the country. No school offers courses for this art, save for the occasional summer workshops that teach comic book drawing and the short courses on comic book appreciation.

The good news is anybody with a taste for the art can pursue a career as a comic book creator. "The only real background you need to become a comic book creator is to have an appreciation of the medium. It would probably help if you had some artistic training or training as a writer, but it's not a requirement," explains Yonzon. "The truth is the comic book industry is so diverse that virtually anybody can put out a comic book. There're no credentials required."

However, Yonzon admits, "The Philippine comic book industry isn't a terribly financially rewarding industry except for the lucky few." Filipino comic book creators earn only about a tenth of what foreign creators earn from the big publishers abroad.

"Comic book creation isn't something you get into for financial reward, at least not in the initial stages. It's really an industry of love," confesses Mango's creator. "People do this here (Philippines) because they want to, because they love the medium, because they want to create, to inspire. This is the best way to nourish the creative spirit."

Creative spirit

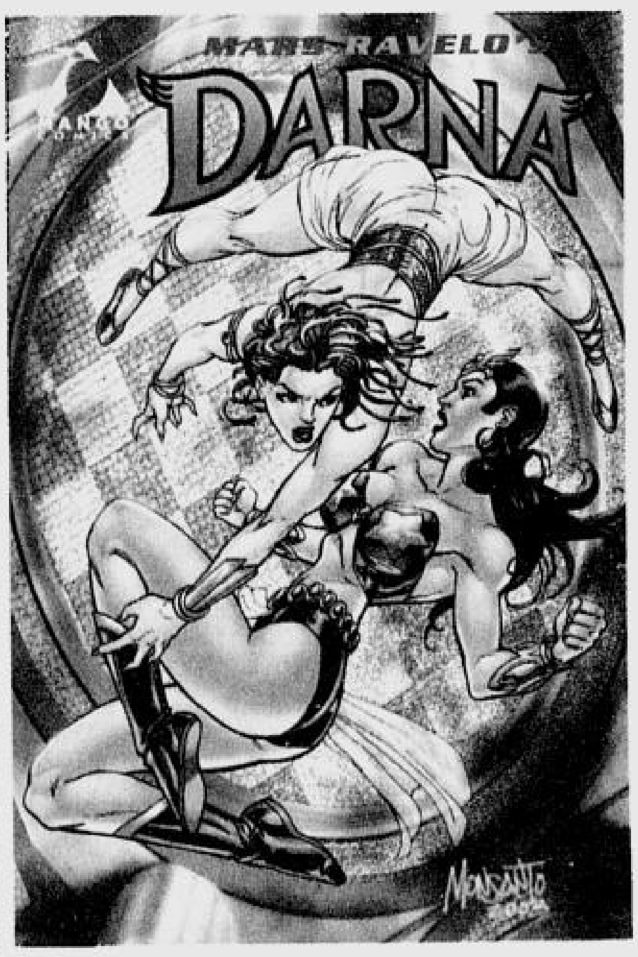
It is the hope of these local comic book creators like Yonzon to stir creativity through the comic book art. "We feel that we're contributing something to the country's creative spirit, it's important for us to inspire other people to be creative."

But there is a lot of skepticism from the Pinoy market. "There's still so much resistance to the comic medium because big companies still see it as something only kids read. So market definition is pretty challenging for us."

According to Yonzon, even Jose Rizal used to draw comic strips. Yonzon feels that if our own national hero believed in comics, there is no reason why the rest of us shouldn't. This young visionary hopes to be able to use comics as a tool for education. "There are many educational comics today, and comics are a great way for children to learn English."

But in the end, it is the art's contribution to the country's creative spirit and legacy that really weighs the most for these local comic book creators. "It's very important to stay creative in the midst of despair, and comic books are easy avenues to be creative."

YONZON, Mango comics editor in chief



NEW improved version of Darna

How can you become more persuasive?

WORKING WOUNDED

Bob Rosner

DEAR WW: My team doesn't pay attention to my suggestions. What can I do to gain their respect?

Not Persuasive

Ketchup is back on top! Perhaps you remember this saucy headline from a few years ago: "Salsa scorches ketchup to become America's number one condiment." Well, it was true. Ketchup sales had seriously thinned. And not for the reasons you might have guessed. It wasn't due to demographic shifts; Ricky Martin and Jennifer Lopez had nothing to do with it. Salsa got hot, according to the president of Heinz, because the marketing of ketchup was "neglected."

Well, the tables have turned. Ketchup marketers have been working hard and through a glut of commercials, ads and promotions, they've returned ketchup to its position of prominence on the American countertop. Now, it seems, you could use a similar campaign. The strategies below will help you pinpoint the reasons for your own decline and help you work your way to the top. For more, check out Jay Conger's book "Winning 'Em Over," (Simon & Schuster, 1998).

Ask for honest feedback. Before you can bolster your credibility you have to know where it's lacking. Start with an honest self-appraisal: what are your strengths and weaknesses? Ask others, both on and off your team. Once you've identified the areas where your credibility is weak, get training or experience, or find a mentor in those areas. It's also useful to consult with experts before your meetings. Saying, "I checked with Roger in Operations ..." can only strengthen your position.

Specialize. As a vegetable, ketchup failed (remember that Reagan fiasco?). As a condiment it's number one. You've got to specialize, too. Become knowledgeable in one or two areas and leave the rest of your team's work to others.

Sell the hole, not the drill. Salespeople call it "benefit sales," focusing on the advantages of using a product rather than the features of the product itself. You can do the same. Instead of selling the details of your ideas, emphasize the benefits that will accrue if they are adopted.

Avoid the hard sell. Sure, some people are addicted to QVC, but most people hate the hard sell. So instead of giving a sales pitch, draw your teammates out. Learn what it will take to win them to your position, then speak directly to their concerns.

Compromise. Look for ways you can craft solutions that mesh your teammates' ideas with your own. They'll be more apt to adopt your approach if it includes their own.

Go for the gut. Facts get you to the table, but emotions close the deal. So, first, try to forge an emotional connection with your teammates. Then, play to their emotions when you try to sell your ideas.

Be quiet. One way to lose credibility is to talk too much. So pick your spots. By turning down the volume you may turn up your credibility.

Follow these tips and you ought to ketchup with the rest of your group.

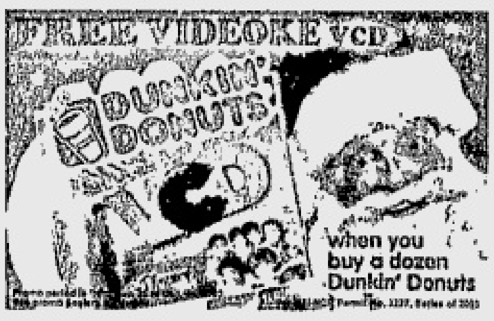
Here are the results of our last workingwounded.com/ABCnews.com poll: Do you get the respect you deserve at work? (2,245 responses)

—Yes, 22.7%

—Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't, 37.4%

—No, 39.8%

(*Bob Rosner is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. Email him at* bob@workingwounded.com.)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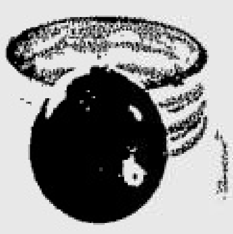
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**
Chief of Correspondents **Pam Pastor**

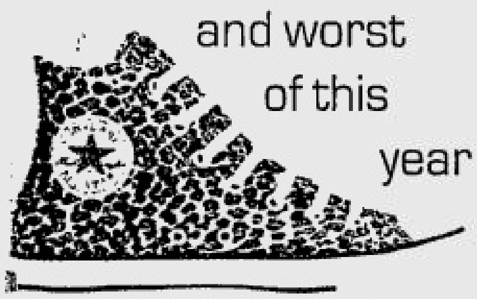
Sony Ericsson

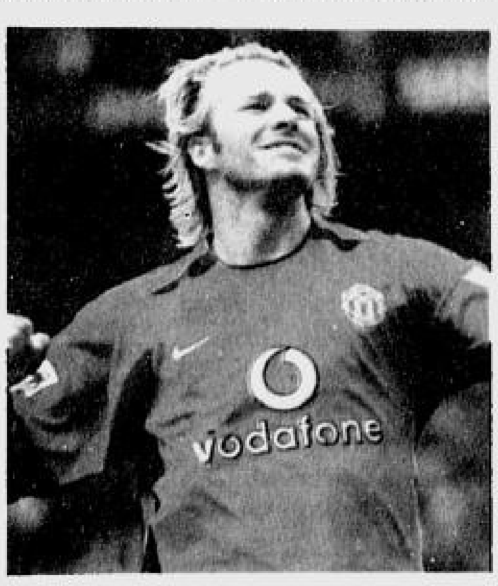
Rewind

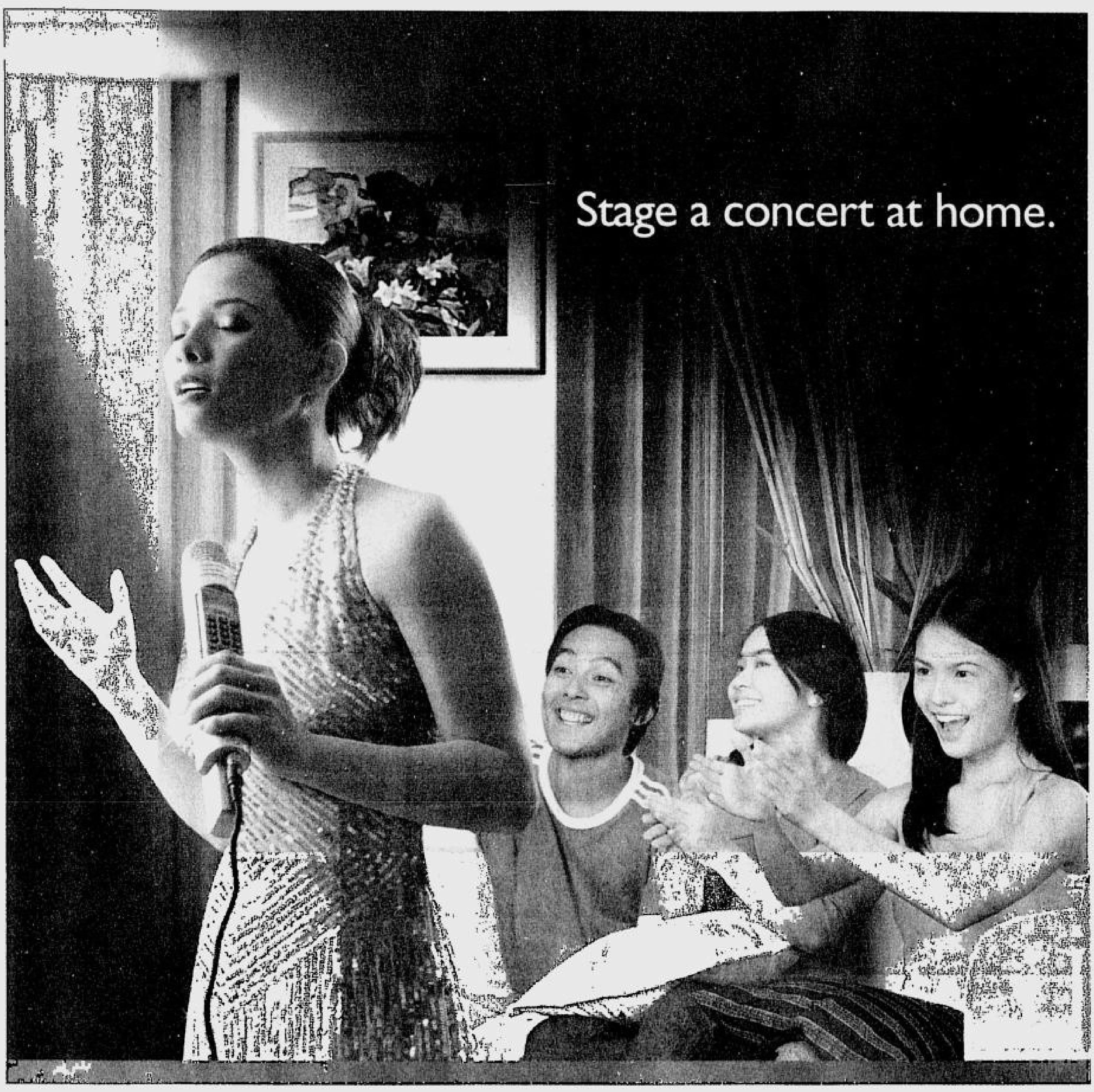
Before we say goodbye to 2003, let's take another look at the year that was—the songs that had us humming, the people who had us talking, the sports moments that had us cheering, the tech discoveries that had us drooling, the events that had us partying, the trends that had us running (to the mall, that is).

We also have the results of the 2bU! Yearender Survey. Check out what you thought was the best and worst of this year





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SMART Simply Amazing!

Per DTI NCR Permit No. 2755, Series of 2003

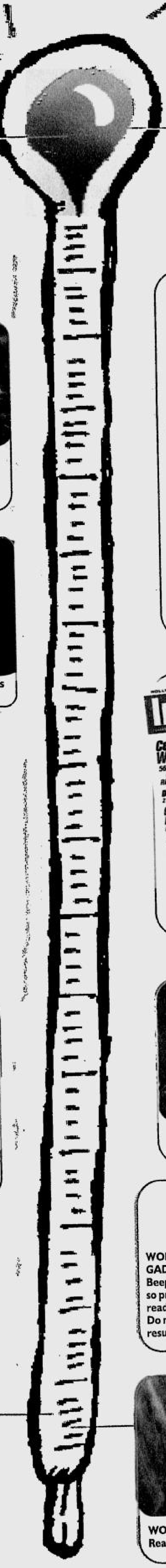
THE 2BU! YEARENDER READER SURVEY

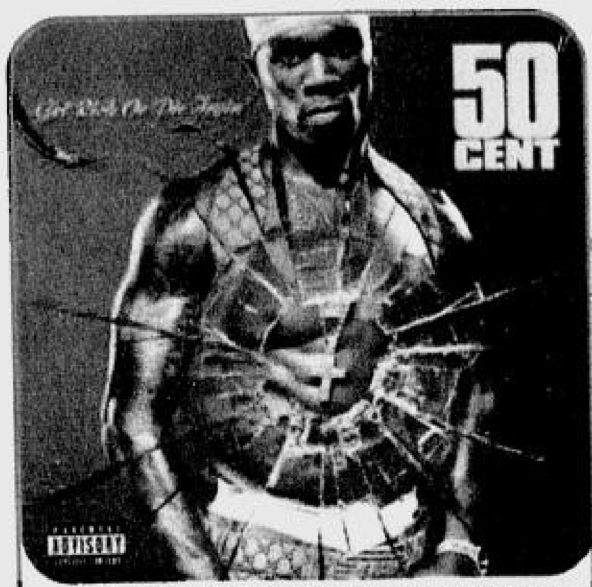
The best and worst of 2003

The votes are in. Here are this year's winners and losers, according to you

WE gave you a few weeks to tell us who you think should be included in the list of the best and worst of 2003 in the categories of food, music, film, fashion, health and beauty, sports, television, literature and technology.

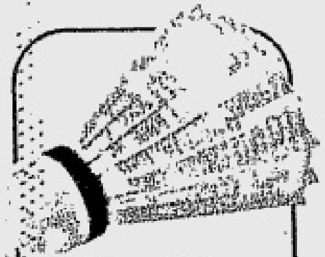
Our inbox was swamped with votes—a handful of which were disqualified due to evident attempts to manipulate the results. After long hours of tallying and counting, here's this year's roster.




50
CENT
Get Rich Or Die Tryin'
ADVISORY

BEST ALBUM PACKAGING. 50 Cent's "Get Rich or Die Tryin'" gets the thumbs up.

BEST BAND. It's a tug-of-war between F4 and Parokya Ni Edgar.



BEST FITNESS REGIMEN. 2003 was the year to rescue our dusty rackets from the attic. Badminton was voted fitness regimen of the year.

MONSTER RADIO
RX93.1

BEST RADIO STATION. The Monster breaks another station's three-year reign. RX 93.1 is voted best station.

BEST SINGER. 2bU! readers are "Crazy in Love" with Beyonce Knowles.

BEST TREND. 2bU! readers loved hoodies, miniskirts and pointy shoes. We do, too.

BEST ACCESSORY. Readers say they jazzed up their outfits with crystal necklaces and bracelets. McDo watches were a winner too.

BEST VIDEO. Beyonce's "Crazy in Love" kept 2bU! readers glued to music channels.

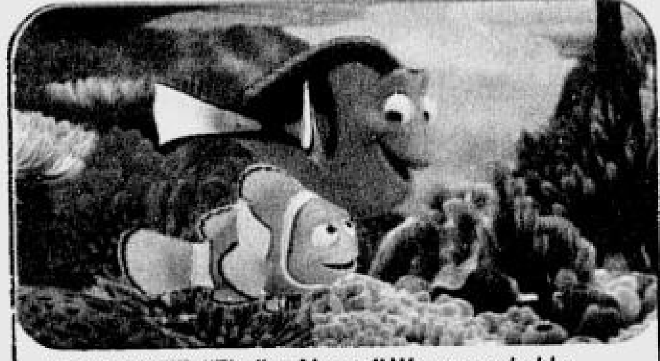
HOLLYWOOD LOVE STORIES HOW 17 COUPLES MAKE IT LAST
InStyle
Celebrity Weddings
56 Pages of Gowns, Shoes, Rings & More
Dressing Up
21 Going-Out Looks
Great Hair Lengths
Find One for You
Drew Barrymore
Her Personal Photos

BEST MAGAZINE. In Style was this year's hottest mag.

BEST CONCERT. She d
charm Manila. Mariah C
Charmbracelet Tour ba

BEST TV SHOW. "CSI," "Meteor Garden" and "Sex and the City" made 2bU! readers fall for their boob tubes even more.

BEST WRITER. Sophie Kinsella is no wizard but she stole the throne from JK Rowling.



BEST MOVIE. "Finding Nemo." We can probably thank Dory for that.

BEST ACTRESS. Kate Hudson won our hearts with her role as Andie Anderson in "How To Lose a Guy in 10 Days."

BEST ACTOR. He still has the charm. Keanu Reeves was voted actor of the year.

WORST TV ACTRESS. Readers say they've had enough of Kris Aquino.

WORST BAND. Yes, you said it. The Masculados make you shudder.

Scrolling Messages
MOTOROLA

WORST GADGET. Beepers are so prehistoric, readers said. Do not resuscitate.

WORST ATHLETE.
was voted worst ath
of his off-court actio

WORST VJ. Heart. Lucky. Heart. Lucky. It's a tie between Heart Evangelista and Lucky Manzano.

WORST VIDEO. T.A.T.U's gimmick didn't work. Readers hated the "All The Things She Said" video.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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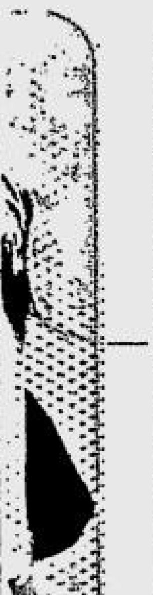

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WWF

Tempting Fate

The long-snouted spinner dolphin is the most common dolphin in the Philippines, it is extremely acrobatic, as it is the only species of dolphin known to spin, hurling itself three meters into the air and turning as many as seven times before hitting the water. Their friendliness and acrobatic displays tempt commercial fishermen to hunt them for food and to use as shark bait. This diminishes their population.

Our children deserve a living planet.

By downloading the logos and picture messages below, you are helping conservation efforts that seek to restore balance to the web of life.

Support EFLAC - Environmental Fund for Legal Action today.

Photos by: Jürgen Freund Lory Tan and WWF-Philippines

Text WWF <keyword> and send to 2366

Example: Text WWF WDOLPH1

DOLPHIN LOGOS AND PICTURE MESSAGES

WDOLPH3 WDOLPH1 WDOLPH8 WDOLPH6 ESAVEDOL EDOLSAVE
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Other Logos and Picture Messages

EDUGSAVE DUGWATCH ESAVEDUG ESOSDUG SDUGONG WDUGONG
E4TRTLE EGRNTRTL ESAVEWS ETURTLE WHLSHRK WMANTAW

Each logo and picture message download costs P15.00.
Available to Globe, Touch Mobile, Smart, Talk 'N Text and Addict Mobile subscribers.

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Mas Merry
Ang Christmas Mo Dito!

Ngayon, ang Nissin Mini Cup Noodles
Chicken and Beef P9.50 *SRP na lang! Available in specially designed Christmas Collecticups with free collectible stickers/tattoos pa!

*P9.50 Suggested Retail Price for Mini Chicken and Beef only

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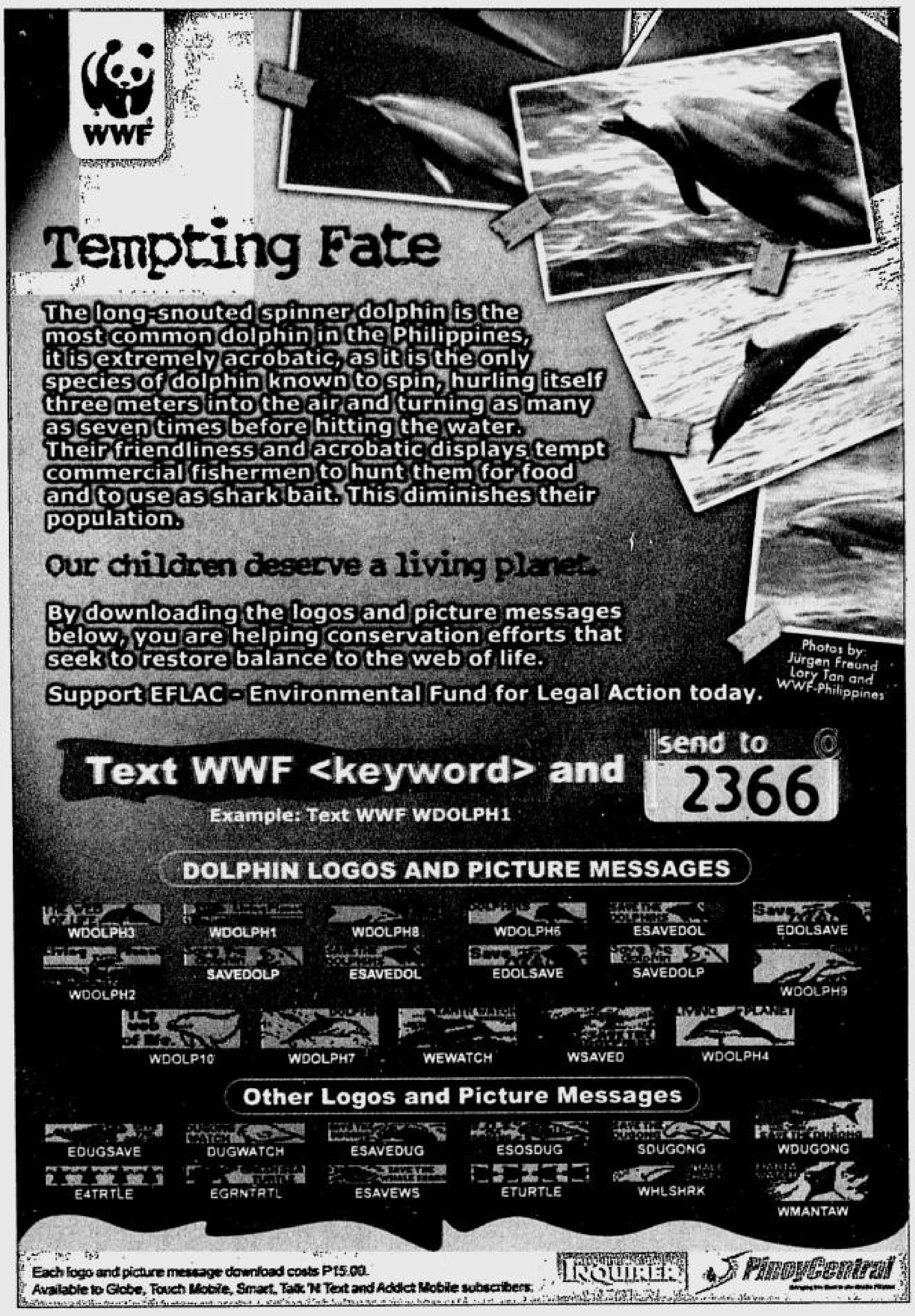

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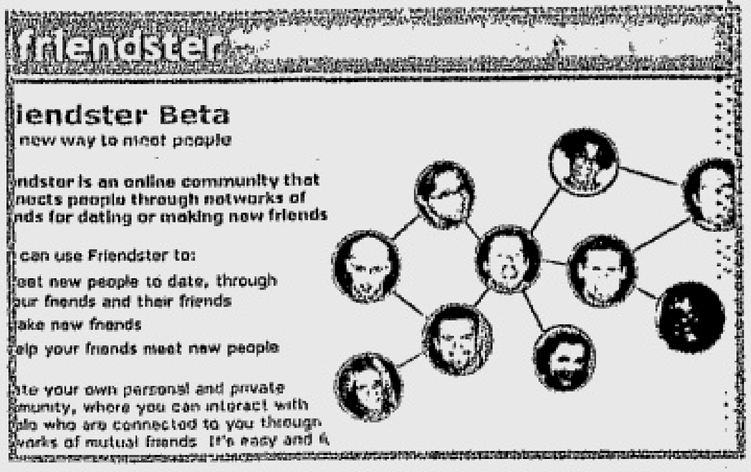
HOME
WHAT CAN YOU DO?
GAME GUIDE
FAQ
COMMUNITY
LEVEL UP!
RAGNAROK
ONLINE RPG
Massively Multiplayer. Awesome Adventure. Only Online.
GRAVITY

RAGNAROK and Oz gave life to the floundering local ISP business.


friendster

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new way to meet people

ndster is an online community that
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THE TOP tech thing to come out of 2003

Friendster rocks our world

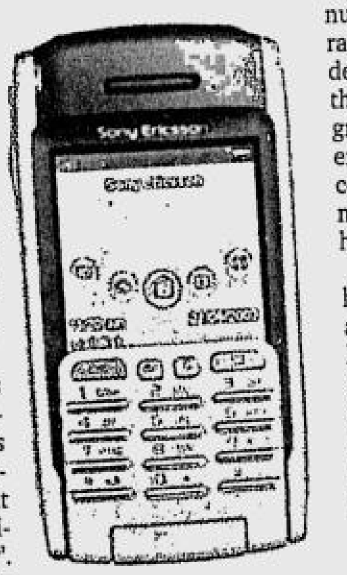
Gary Mercado
2bU! Correspondent

FRIENDSTER is the top tech thing to come out of 2003. These days, you can't go in to a fast food chain without overhearing the crew trade e-mail addresses so they can 'friendster' each other.

Friendster is a big surprise in many ways. How a simple website can achieve worldwide success where many far more complex, high-tech designs have dismally failed is a lesson in the limits of technology as well.

As Friendster shows, success is not spelled by new-fangled technologies but rather by simple, well executed, easy-to-understand concepts based on people's desire for community.

This also means there is still hope for many of those aspiring to make something out of the Net, and that you don't have to break the bank or invent new Internet data transmission protocols to achieve success.



SONY Ericsson P900

Another surprise is how Friendster continues to go strong with us Pinoys who usually dismiss anything that achieves wild popularity as 'jologs' or 'baduy'. Friendster has risen above social boundaries, and everyone, from Fil-Ams, grade school students, company bosses, celebrities, a SexBomb dancer, politicians, basketball players, and my friend's nanny is into it.

Ragnarok and Oz

A more quiet but similarly successful Internet-based success is Ragnarok and Oz, our very own Massively Multiplayer Online Game or MMOG.

NOKIA 6600

Here is further proof that Internet ventures can be successful by nurturing natural human tendencies such as the ability to group together, share objectives and form communities, as opposed to merely relying on flash and high-tech gadgetry.

True, the technology behind these games is itself amazing. For the most part, however, the innovations are not found in adding feature upon new bloated feature, but in making the game "smaller" so it can perform acceptably well using even limited bandwidth such as a dial-up connection.

Ragnarok and Oz gave life to the floundering local ISP business. Prepaid Internet cards were in quick demand, and many tried different ones to see which ones could allow them to play faster. It has also showed glaring inadequacies in ISPs inter-networking with one another (aka "peering" setups).

These problems would hopefully lead to performance improvements that would pave the way for "more important" network-based technologies such as Voice over IP or file-sharing.

DVD writers

As if the government's anti-piracy drive isn't enough of an uphill climb already, the dawn of the easy-to-use DVD writer is here, and a hungry and expectant market awaits, willing to shell out big bucks to be able to write DVDs for themselves.

This year saw the entry of 4xDVD writers, and the year ends with 8xDVD +/- 40xCD combination writers that can write both movies and data for less than P13,000 or thereabouts.

The still pricey technology is far from perfect for now. Current speeds are too slow for more than occasional copying, and there are still chances of errors or incompatibility.

Not to worry, however, as all one has to do is remember how the CD writer managed to evolve from a techie's fantasy to a veritable household appliance like it is now. Rest assured that the DVD writer will soon follow suit.

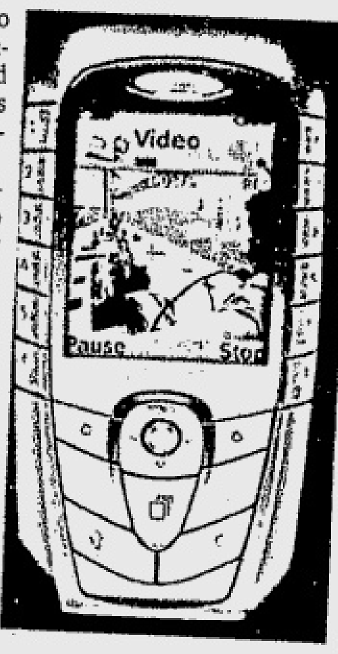
Cheap CDRoms and CD writers

Most of the time, we complain about how expensive tech stuff are. However, occasionally a blast of good fortune comes our way, and we eagerly lap it up.

Take CDRom drives. Decent ones are now available for less than P1,000. CD writers for approximately P2,500 are also a godsend, given that these things used to cost ten times that much.

Dependability is also not an issue anymore. Now even my mom, who cannot text, can burn CDs.

This year, more than ever, the Internet became everyone's playground, watering hole and dating place


Video
Pause
Stop

SIEMENS SX1

Phone photo and video capabilities

Lets face it, for the most part, taking pictures from cellphones sucks. The quality is good enough for the quick fun pic or two, but when you want to take a decent shot, phones fall very much short.

Enter the Nokia 6600, the Siemens SX1, and the Sony Ericsson P900. Their 64k camera and LCD capabilities are just for starters.

Other features include MP3 and MPEG format support, FM radios, full Personal Information Management functions plus PC or Mac synching capabilities that venture into Personal Digital Assistant (PDAs) territory, WAP, MMS, SMS, GPRS, Irda and Bluetooth connectivity, 480 x 640 pixel displays (almost rivaling a small computer!)—the list goes on!

There is simply no end to innovations in technology, and in 2003, as in years past, telecom companies led the way. Hooray for new-generation cell phones!

DOWNLOAD NOW AND DOUBLE YOUR CHANCES TO WIN!
addict MOBILE
Download Speed
Get 2 raffle entries with every BABE CALENDAR download and double your chances of winning the ultimate ride!
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Use the 'Quick-Click' Menu to highlight and select the content you want:
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2 MMS DOWNLOADS or MESSAGES SENT = 1 RAFFLE ENTRY
Now! 1 BABE DOWNLOAD = 2 RAFFLE ENTRIES
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(0918) 382-4061 or (0916) 200-1160
or e-mail us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE 2bU!

To be you! • Be young • To be you! • Be you

2003's top fashion picks

F4, the metrosexual, chandelier earrings and the LV Murakami bag earned the best buzz in 2003

By Jason Doplito
2bU! correspondent

Murakami bags

PERHAPS the ultimate status symbol for many women is this Louis Vuitton bag that is a bubblegum follow-up to Hello Kitty. Designed by Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, the bags are a stark contrast to the usual classic-looking, brown and gold Vuitton bags that we've gotten used to. But the exclusivity of these $5,000 creations is at risk: Faux versions have sprouted like mushrooms in various *tiangges* in the metropolis.

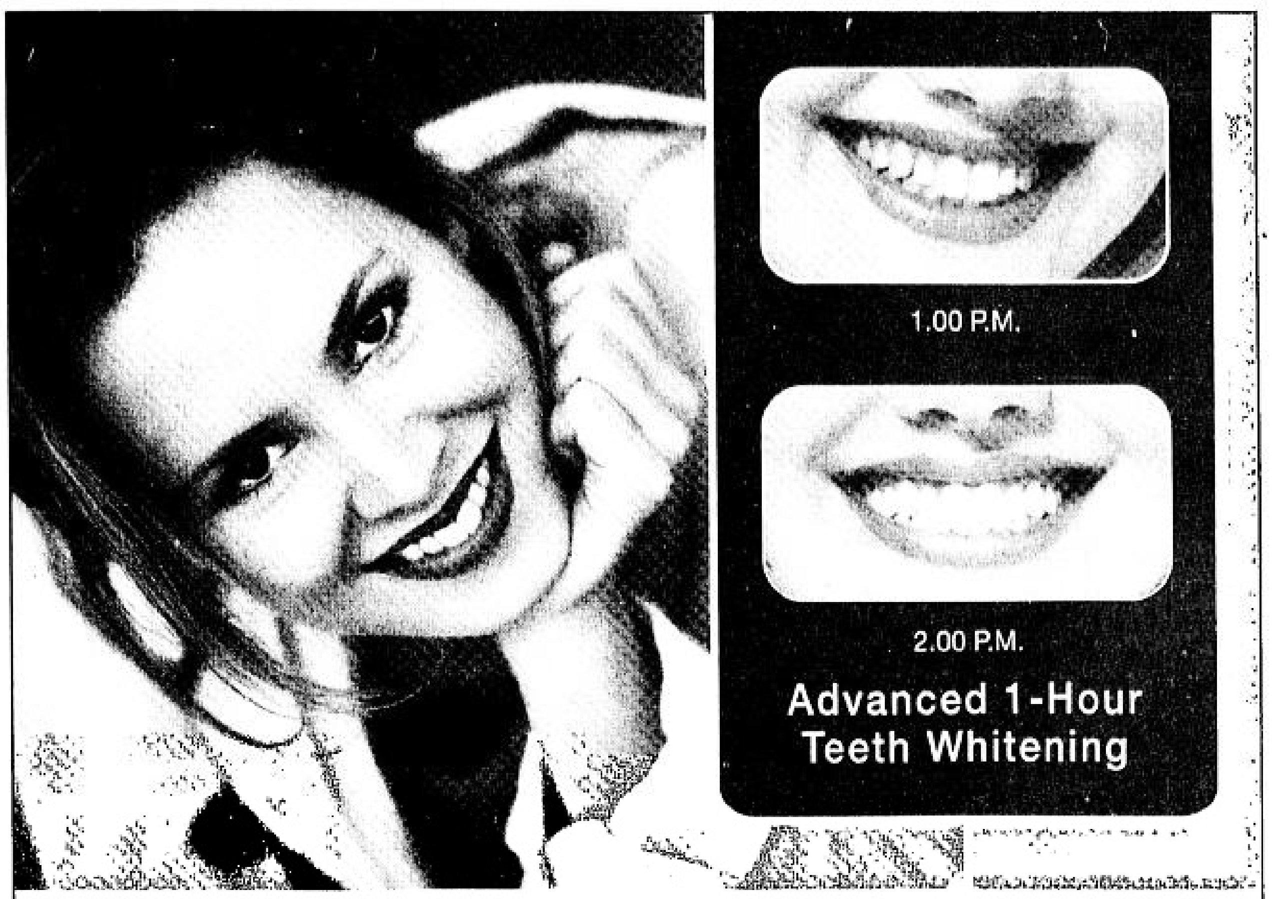
Converse Chuck Taylor

They were hot this year, thanks to Avril Lavigne, Simple Plan, Sum 41 and Good Charlotte. And it sure helped that these classics now come in funky designs like leopard patterns and fiery-printed canvas.

Metrosexuals

The New York Times defines it as "straight urban men who are willing, even eager, to embrace their feminine side." Although the term is consumerist in meaning as it alludes to the emerging trendiness of the male heterosexual, it is good to note that males aren't doomed to having protruding beer bellies and horrible get-ups. Just one look at the ultimate metrosexual symbol, David Beckham, and it becomes harder to imagine

2003/D2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2.00 P.M.
Advanced 1-Hour Teeth Whitening

Get whiter teeth in One Hour, One Visit with BriteSmile and...Save up to 40%!*

(You pay only P15,000! Offer ends 31 Dec 2003)

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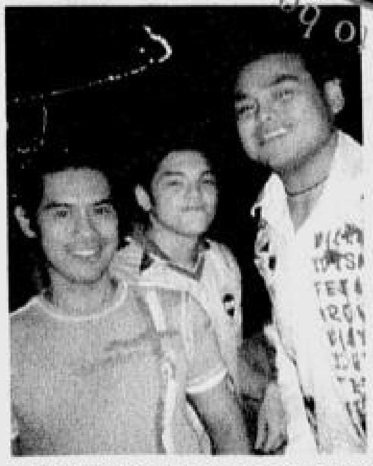
'tis the season to make great things possible Globe HANDYPHONE

THE BOY Wonder and Wonder Woman at the Rock and Royalty party

DAPHNE Oseña and Patrick Paez at a wedding

BIRTHDAY GIRL. Tessa Prieto-Valdes with Rajo Laurel


PARTY ON! Cute boys on a night out

MANO PO. Marc Nelson with a bevy of cheongsam-clad girls

CHOCOLAT! Raya Mananquil at Max Brenner's chocolate bar

KISSING PLATFORM
SMOOCHING under the mistletoe that is the kissing platform.

Getting jiggy with it

Tim Yap

OUTSIDE is the new inside.

That, in a nutshell, sums up the night life of 2003. With al fresco bars sprouting like mushrooms all over the city and the "no smoking" issues inside bars and clubs dominating a huge part of partyphiles' minds, hip young Manila stayed out and about in a year filled with headlines about war, SARS, political rivalry and Kris Aquino.

This year, Greenbelt dominated the night strip, what with a hundred and one hotspots competing for the young, urban reveler's buck.

Temple bar and Resto 12 made sure the crowds kept coming back for more, using innovative club concepts such as R&B on a Tuesday night (for Temple) and parties that start at midnight (12 at 12).

Nuvo had its fair share of posh chill, with scenesters posing till way past bedtime (what bedtime?!). Countless launches were done on this strip, from garden-variety product shebangs to intimate dinners for 100 (a foie gras-truffle degustation by Margarita Fores, perhaps?).

Dessert innovations such as Chef Fernando Uva's chocnut ice cream and Fores' truffle ice cream made heading out to this strip an even better treat. So who cares if you mix your sweets and your alcohol? Candy flipping is the word.

Proving that we are not as poor as we presume to be (despite a budget deficit that would scale the whole stretch of Edsa), designer brands, new franchises and theme bars came in by the dozen, and threw lavish parties.

This was the year when post-millennium decadence took on a new spin. Guilt took a backstage seat while indulgence grabbed the limelight. Times like these (war, SARs, political rivalry, and Kris Aquino)—everyone does need a juicy.

The most overused term this year was the word "ball". Everyone wanted to have a big, giant ball while the country drowned in debt (I just hope the organizers of these parties didn't). A renaissance in nostalgia, from music to fashion and people, reigned as we danced to Boyet Almazan's beats every Friday at Dream Bar 6750 and raided lola's closet to attend Preview's Style Society gala.

Present tense, R&B was played in all the clubs to keep the people coming. DJ Steve Mills, along with other spinmasters like Johnny Verse (aka Jon Herrera) and Badboy Jeff, played pied pipers to a young and beautiful, hip-hopping and totally up-for-it crowd of models, basketball players and breakdancers.

When sick of the bars and clubs, home became the refuge.

"The party is over here," said the sign at the end of the night that pointed to a particular place where everyone could just let loose and wait till the sun was too bright..

Countless pre, during and after parties at home—more like dinners that stretched to the next day (all very private, of course)—replaced renting hotel rooms during "peak" season.

It was a year of diversity too—an anything-goes time, with the rich, poor, stylish, trendy, jologs, starstruck, celebrity-minded and virtual unknowns all hobnobbing while waiting for the next big thing to happen.

As the year draws to a close, let us recall, in no particular order (just the fondest memories that go with them)—the 10 best events of the year.

1. The Louis Vuitton Launch Party

Hands down the party of the year with overflowing bling bling and bubbly, fun and fab scandalous moments in the bathroom and on the dance floor.

The LVMH group opened their Greenbelt 4 boutique by bringing in a whole caboodle of Hong Kong and Parisian stuff, from furniture to bouncers, just for the party—not to mention giving the club Cats a whole new look—and finished more than 200 bottles of Moet, 500 LV leather bracelets as giveaways, a thousand hangovers the next day and "kerching kerching" sales for the mega prestigious brand.

2. The Gucci gathering

The brand associated with the designer Tom Ford opened with a big bang, all dressed in black but not bleary. Champagne poured and the A list set posed without caring much for the price tags. There was much demand and anticipation for the coming of this fashion giant, now in Greenbelt 4. "And I didn't have to spend that much," I overheard Stores Specialists Inc.'s visionary head (and God's gift to Philippine high-end retail) Anton Huang whispering to a guest during the launch party.

3. ABS-CBN's Happy 50 Celebration

From a star-studded (a definite understatement) ball for 500 to an open field concert with the Taiwanese and Filipino pop sensations attended by 50,000, ABS-CBN proved that they're indeed the country's largest network simply by throwing the biggest parties "kapamilya" parties!

4. The Met's Terno Ball

For one night, fashionistas young and old donned the Filipina dress that made Imelda Marcos stand out. Bea Zobel Jr., Ino Manalo and Ben Chan joined hands for this terno renaissance, thus ushering pride not only in the dress, but also of the beautiful female that is the Filipina. Mabuhay!

5. Tessa turns 40

No other woman could get away with a marathon-slash-scavenger hunt and luau to mark her turning a decade younger. Ageless and constantly evolving, Tessa is our generation's real iconic diva, with all her wigs, boa feathers and yoga gear prettifying a petite frame that's ironically larger than life.

6. Greenbelt's Rock and Royalty

The "exclusive" park known as Greenbelt was opened up for everyone in costume, with ghouls, goblins and Michael Jackson obligingly turning up.

Rock stars ruled, while kids and kids at heart had a field day posing for pics with P. Diddy, Madonna and Britney (without the saliva-swapping, mind you). Well, it's much nearer than Enchanted Kingdom.

7. The Tatler Ball

Anton San Diego proved to all that the elite set ain't dead. For the second straight year, the Tatler Ball had the country's wealthiest and most glamorous going all out for a charitable cause. Only a few are invited to this ball, but the whole world wants to attend.

8. Cream Halloween Ball and Hed Kandy

NBC Tent is used to the legions of Big Fish punters, but this night was overwhelming in terms of pomp and party vibe. It seemed like the whole world (well, ok, just Manila) wanted to relive their childhood and celebrate Halloween, so they just followed the yellow brick road and partied the night away.

Another Big Fish catch where trendo-philes trooped by the thousands was the Hed Kandy party. Where there's Hed Kandy, there's much eye candy, too. So, look, but don't touch. Touch, but don't taste. Taste, but don't swallow.

9. BBC's Hotel Costes

Manila felt so chi chi with the fun and fab vibe of Hotel Costes DJ David De Barce. Even if it fell on the night of the Oakwood mutiny and everyone had to vacate the place for fear of the troops taking over, BBC's biggest treat had partyphiles' hips swaying and everyone talking about the event for weeks.

10. Electroclash

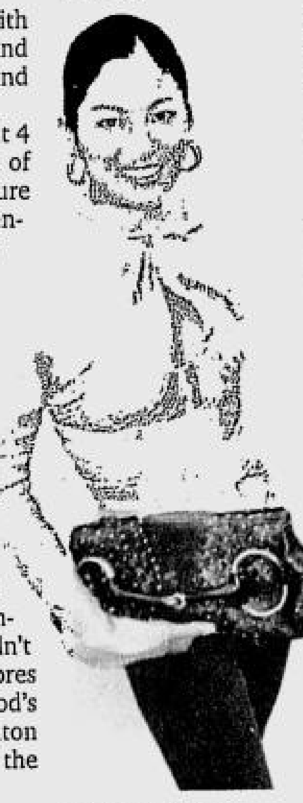
Fashion borders broken down. All freaks united. Downtown dolls gathered at the space where Sambo's used to reign and threw an all-night electroclash party headed by Solid Soul Movement shaker Ronald Pasion with DJ Mulan on the decks. There, Tessa Valdes felt like a regular party girl. But more than the fashion and the people, it was the vibe that made the party rock.

There you have it.

Now going back to life on the outside... I've decided (along with the whole world) to hop over to Boracay and count the last hours of 2003 there while sipping my fruitshake and jiggying to Club Paradiso's beats as we toast an even more fruitful 2004.

Have a Super! year ahead.

This year, Greenbelt dominated the night strip, with a hundred and one hot spots competing for the young, urban reveler's buck


JUST MARRIED. Miriam Quiambao at the Gucci show

2003's top fashion picks

From page D1

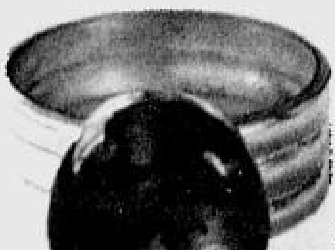
how man used to be represented as apes.

Chandelier earrings

The longer they are, the better they seem. Glimmering and sparkling accessories like bracelets and necklaces are still a hit in fashion, and chandelier earrings are the ultimate add-ons for glamour and drama.

SARS masks

Trust the fashion-conscious to turn even the most boring surgical mask into an avenue for creative display. Widespread rumors about Burberry and Gucci producing their own line prompted a lot of fashion victims to inquire about them in the department stores in Hong Kong. Even local designers came out with their own versions to ward off the virus in style. Hopefully, there won't be any need for them when the new year comes.



Semi-precious stones

Your sister, your girlfriend, your girl bud, your niece, your mom... okay, everyone has them.

F4

From ultra-flat, straight-ironed hair to flower-printed shirts, this Taiwanese boyband is responsible for spawning hundreds of generic-looking boys with beautiful hair and well-styled quirky clothes. Never mind if the overkill singing of their hit refrain, "Oh baby, baby, my baby, baby,..." is enough to send even the most sane person to reach out for the scissors and shear the hair off the guy who sings it.

Hoodies

Hooded sweatshirts, perhaps the most comfortable thing to wear next to pajamas, were a safe bet to wear when you can't think of any. Think Eminem in "8 Mile."

'Ukay-ukay'

2bU!'s fashion freaks personify the second-hand clothing mania. Who wouldn't be tempted to buy P50 shirts that scream designer labels? Dry cleaning should do the trick in making your "*ukay*" finds good as new.

Beyoncé

It's not her year only in music, but in fashion as well. Only a few can pull off tripping down the sidewalk in a tight tank top and short shorts, wiggle like a worm, and still look sexy, divine and stunning.

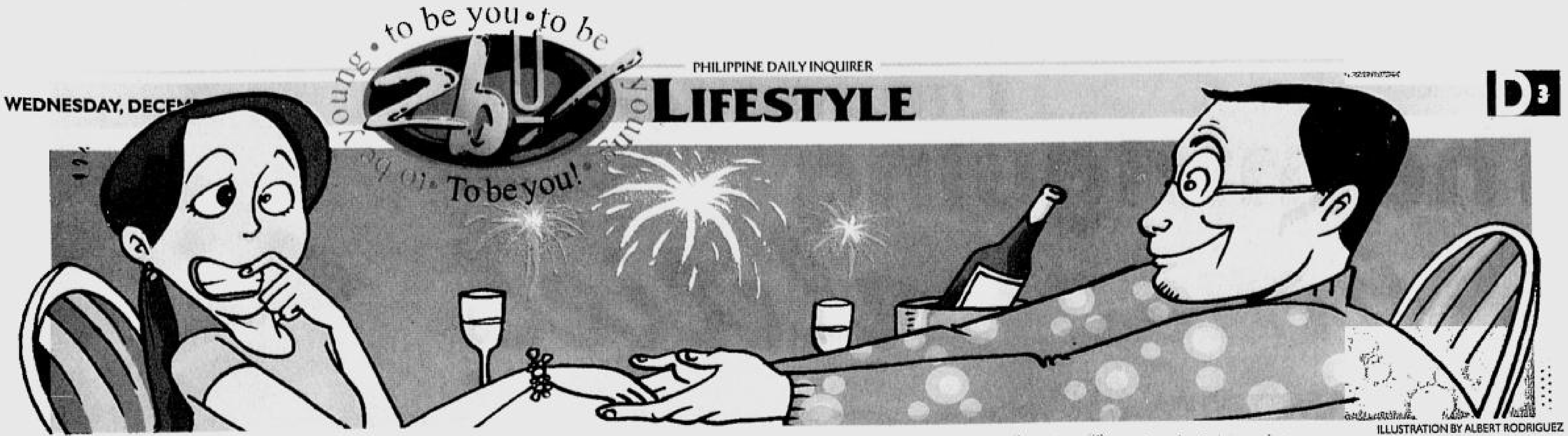

to be young • to be you • to be young • to be you
2bU
To be you!

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Niño Mark Sablan
& September Mabino

She finds it hard to break up with her boyfriend

DEAR Mark and Sep,
I have a secret boyfriend who is 14 years older than me. Even my family doesn't know about him. Besides, I don't think they'd approve of him. But my feelings for him have faded. I want to break up with him but I can't do it because I'm afraid of hurting him.

GIRLIE

Think of it this way, okay? If you really really don't want to hurt him, then break up with him as soon as possible. Prolonging the inevitable is simply postponing something that you need to do now. With faded feelings, it's bound to happen. By tagging him along, you're just taking the poor guy along for a ride that's not going to get him anywhere pleasant. Don't be a coward and run away from your obligation to tell him the truth. Keeping it away from him will just complicate and even worsen things when he eventually finds out, especially when he finds out about it through another person. So start figuring out how you're going to go about it, because you simply have to, if you really don't want to double the pain he's going to suffer from this.

MARK

> He's 14 years older—he should be mature and strong enough to take it

Girlie, the guy is 14 years older than you. I'm sure he's mature enough to take rejection. He might not take it sitting down—he might even rant or cry or do something embarrassing, but he will take it. He has to. You, of all people, should know how useless it is to keep someone in a relationship against that person's will, and I know that your boyfriend would understand.

Be fair. Break up with him as soon, as civilly and as honestly, as possible and then hope for his best reaction. Be a man! Er, woman. Oh wait, you're Girlie.

SEPTEMBER

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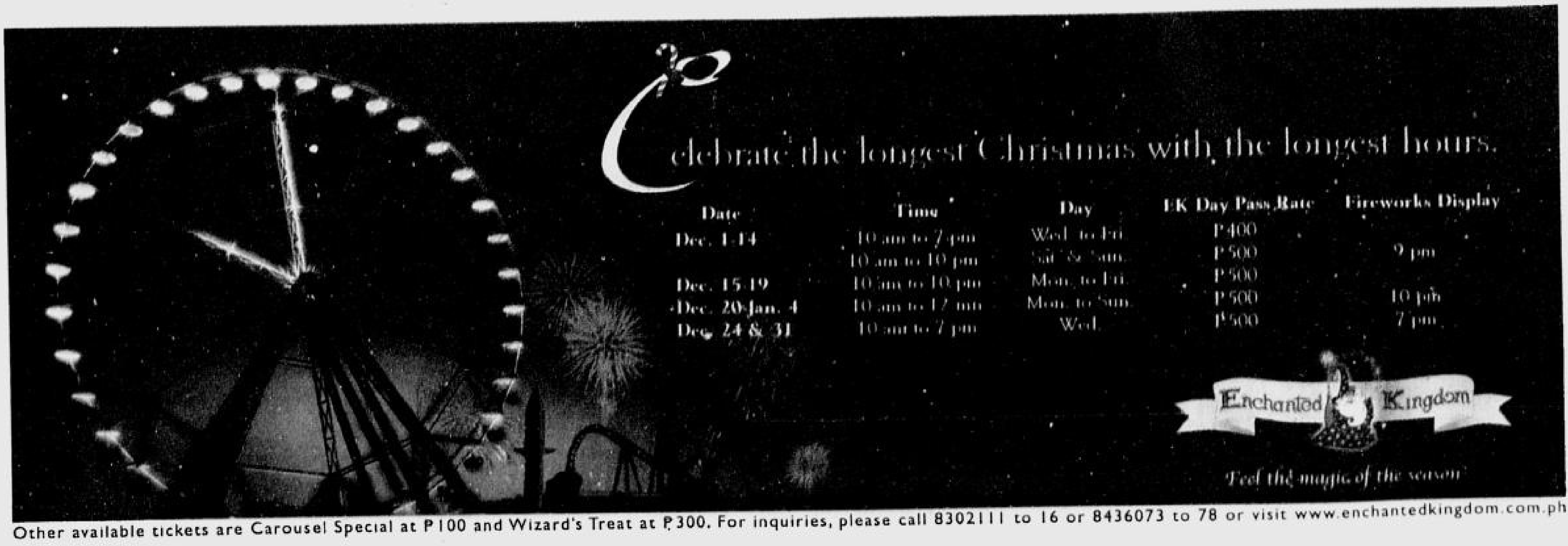

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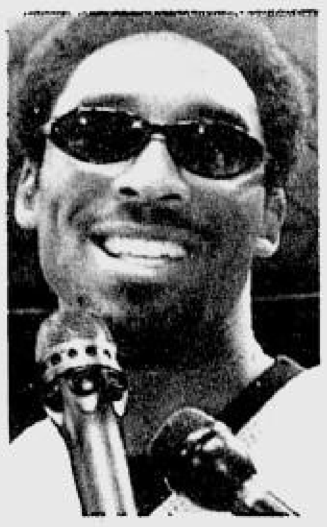
The intriguing *personalities* of 2003

By Jason Doplito and
Pam Pastor



KOBE Bryant. Sure, we know a lot of things about Kobe. He plays great ball, Brandy was his prom date, he married Vanessa Laine in 2001 when she was 19, they had a baby early this year.

But the 24-year-old Los Angeles Lakers star sent everyone buzzing when he was accused of sexual assault by a 19-year-old woman who worked in a Colorado hotel that Kobe had stayed in. She said that on June 30, he asked her into his room and then raped her.

Kobe defended himself by saying that what happened was consensual. "I didn't force her to do anything against her will. I'm innocent," Kobe said at a press conference. Vanessa has decided to stand by his side. While people are still waiting for developments in the case, Kobe has gone back to playing ball.

Madonna and Britney. The queen and princess of pop had no better thing to do at the MTV Awards than shock their audience by liplocking in the middle of their performance. That earned them a lot of publicity, especially since the two have been pretty quiet for sometime. Aside from sharing saliva, the two also collaborated on a song, the first single off Britney's album, In the Zone. Although there were no shockers on the video, the pairing was news, but still the final result was disappointing.

Sadako. It was love at first scream. From the first moment Sadako crawled out of that television in the Japanese horror flick Ringu, movie fans were captivated. Was it the unruly hair, the creepy eyes or the bloody fingernails? We don't know.

What we know is, Samara, Sadako's counterpart in the US version, did not compare. What we know is, although a handful of other Asian horror flicks have been shown in local theaters, no other "monster" came close. What we know is, the faceless Sadako has staying power. That's enough to get her on this list.

Mahal and Mura. The second coming of Mahal the midget was embraced by a lot of people, even more so now that she has a "twin."

Mahal and Mura have danced their way into the hearts of noontime show fans. They've also provided enough stories to keep tongues busy. There was Mahal's supposed romance with a regular-sized guy who seemed bent on kicking off a career in show business. There were questions about Mura's true gender. Girl or boy, midget or no midget, there's no doubt about it. These little people made it big in 2003.

Bennifer. Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez are not only pressured to maintain their romantic relationship, but they have to do so in the eyes of the public as well. No other celebrity couple has been as high profile as them, and its no wonder that they had to temporarily call off their supposed fall wedding. But despite the attention that they've been getting, the two could only watch as critics and moviegoers alike badmouthed their hugely unpopular film, Gigli.

Paris Hilton. We're sure you've been bombarded by junk mail headlining this girl. She is the 22-year-old partygirl-slash-billion-dollar-heiress to the Hilton hotel fortune who made the big mistake of letting an ex-beau videotape her most private moments.

Weeks ago, news about the Paris Hilton sex tapes broke out. And as the downloadable files, spam and websites popped up, it became more than just news. It became a reality. Paris was 19 when she filmed the video with Rick Solomon, who is now Shannen Doherty's husband. And while her reality TV series "The Simple Life" has started airing in the US, people still continue to talk about (and download) the tape.

F4. Thanks to ABS-CBN's relentless promotion, "Meteor Garden," became a hit a few days after it reached Philippine soil.

Chinovela rose to popularity, along with F4, the collective name of the four leading men of the series.

Names like Dao Ming Si and Hua Zei Lei rolled off the tongues of Filipinos as if Mandarin was their native language. The TV shows flourished and the music started to take over. CDs, VCDs and other merchandise started selling like crazy. And now, three concerts later, fans still can't get enough of Jerry Yan, Vic Zhou, Ken Zhu and Vanness Wu.

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Michael Jackson. It's definitely not a good year for Jacko. After being caught in the middle of intrigues, from dangling his own baby on the hotel window to his controversial documentaries, the former king of pop is now embroiled in new child molestation allegations. He's out on a $3M bail, and parents can only cling on to their little boys, hoping they won't catch Michael's fancy.

Friends. Joey, Chandler, Ross, Rachel, Phoebe and Monica. We've been friends with them for 10 years and now they're saying goodbye. No thanks to delayed action from local television networks, we've had to settle for waiting for Astrovision to release the VCDs of the latest seasons to get our dose of quality time with the gang from Central Perk.

We love them and we'll miss them. Like letters from old pals that we can read and reread, we've got our old VCDs to watch again and again to remind us of the good times. And when hit by extreme longing, we can always sing "Smelly Cat."

Justin Timberlake. Rolling Stone magazine is hailing the former N'Sync sensation as the new king of pop. And only a few dare question the title; after all, it's high time we dethrone child-molesting stars from popdom.

Fire up your New Year.
Newlist zed
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MANDY charmed the press and fans during her visit to Manila.

The acoustic flowering

By Maui V. Reyes
Contributor

BRITNEY who?

If you've ever written more than 50 songs about your ex-girlfriend and played them on your acoustic guitar, all alone in your room and on the brink of crying your eyes out, then this was the year you should have sought out a record deal.

2003 was the year when everything acoustic hit the country, boosting Pinoy artists like Nyoy Volante and Paolo Santos to superstardom.

On the side, pop stars who went solo left their bandmates in the dust while they soared up the charts—Justin Timberlake and Beyonce Knowles led the pack—while 50 Cent was the breakthrough artist of the year.

Punk purists began to cuss at the likes of Avril Lavigne, Sum 41, Good Charlotte, and Simple Plan, while prepubescent girls tore down their Eminem and Britney posters and replaced them with these pop-punk stars.

And yes, it was the year when it was okay for guys to cry. It's not uncool, as long as Chris Carraba was doing it, and getting paid for it. Dashboard Confessional made emo mainstream (again, much to the frustration of select purists), pushing bands like Finch, Taking Back Sunday and Thursday into the limelight.

America began to get serious with fighting music piracy, just as Kazaa started its own little "revolution" ("It's not piracy. It's peer-to-peer sharing.").

Artists were dropped from their record labels (Chicosci), while others were signed (The Mongols) and many went indie (<s>andwich and Razorback). And finally, Orlando-bred boybands were given a much-needed rest, replaced by a fresh-faced, surefire future "VH1 Where Are They Now?" starlet, Hilary Duff.

And this year's major superstar would be technology: the revamped iPod, along with Audiovox and every other compact 10GB and up music player, has very well replaced your trusted MP3 player and Discman (Wow! That means listening to "Ocho-Ocho" nonstop for 11 hours!).

This year's .biggest music phenomenon, however, came in the form of a boyband made up of four Taiwanese actors that ABS-CBN exploited so much, the once-beleaguered network is now once more in the black.

January

We predicted last year that many new OPM releases would penetrate into Top 40 radio like a bad disease—and we were right... well, sort of.

Sugarfree's debut, amply titled "Sa Wakas," was launched on Jan. 25, and all 100 copies of the album that was brought to the gig sold out (really EMI, this is Sugarfree we're talking about).

Fred Durst managed to create some publicity for himself after announcing to the world his "feelings" for **Britney Spears**, and that he's one of the producers of her new album.

Eminem rode out on "8 Mile," with the soundtrack topping the charts for January.

February

50 Cent burst into the music scene and topped not only the hip-hop charts, but Top 40 as well.

Boyz II Men caused major traffic at the Fort with their Valentine's Day concert ("*Uy, bakit tatlo na lang sila?*"). **Norah Jones** killed us at the Grammys with five trophies, including Album and Song of the Year.

John Mayer won Best Male Vocal Performance, and released his second effort, "Heavier Things." **Michael Jackson** freaked us out once more with his TV special.

March

Linkin Park released "Meteora," but everyone's listening to **Evanescence**'s debut, thanks to the "Daredevil" movie. The **Dixie Chicks** proclaimed that they're "ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas," and such political statements leaked into the Oscars.

April

Madonna wanted to know "what the f--- are you doing?" as fans downloaded MP3s off her new album, "American Life." R&B veteran **Luther Vandross** suffered a stroke. 50 Cent and **Ja Rule** shot each other with words on freestyle "dis records."

May

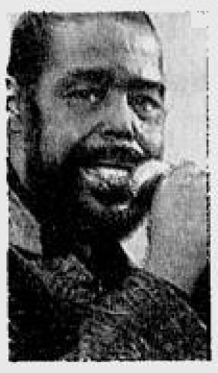
Beyonce's "Crazy in Love" was released, and became the anthem for the summer. **Jewel** ditched the folk look and gone disco.

June

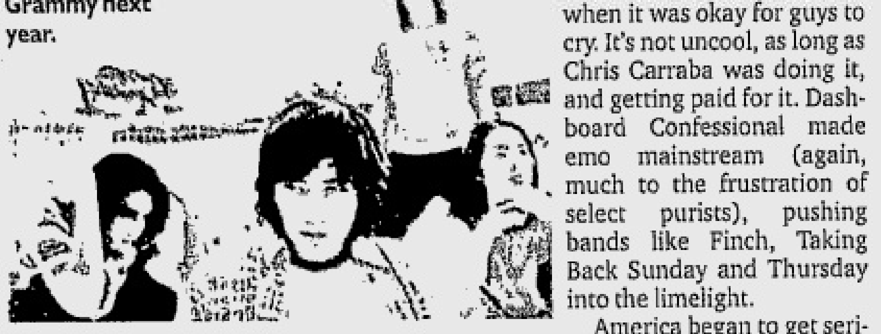
It's another excuse to party at **Fête de la Musique**, where **Electronica Manila**

THE ACOUSTIC/ E4

WE'RE gonna party like it's your birthday, because you're assured a Grammy next year.



IT'S all about soul. Barry White died at the age of 58.



"OH what to do, what to do with all the money we've got..." F4 may be cheesy, but they're a hit with the masses.

What made OPM rock in 2003

WE asked a select few musicians what was the most defining moment in OPM (original Pilipino music) in 2003 for them.

When almost all the bands I played with back to back in a show released an indie effort... like Narda, Matilda, Purple Chickens, Urban Dub and itchyworms!—**Diego Mapa, Monsterbot and Cambio**

The Eraserheads winning the Hall of Fame Award at this year's NU 107 Rock Awards!—**Ebe Dancel, Sugarfree**

Being part of <s>andwich's third album, "Thanks to the Moon's Gravitational Pull," and writing songs, playing and recording with Kjwan.—**Marc Abaya, <s>andwich, Kjwan and MTV VJ**

The release of so many independent albums—albums with depth and musicality.—**Zach Lucero, Imago**

The Ocho-Ocho.—**Mong Alcaraz, Chicosci**

Having my first-ever album out and seeing thousands of people moshing to music I helped create.—**Yan Yuzon, The Mongols**

Dindin stepping in just in time to prevent a Chito-Vinci brawl! God bless Parokya!—**Rico Blanco, Rivermaya**

Maui V. Reyes

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Add some spark to your New Year.

LOGO LOVE 1
LOGO SEXYMA 2
LOGO SEXYBABY 3
LOGO LUVROSE 4
LOGO HOTBEYB 5
LOGO DOLFINS 6
LOGO SCORPIONS 7
LOGO ULUVME 8
LOGO FRENCH 9
LOGO DREAMLUV 10
LOGO HARTLOVE 11
LOGO OTSO 12
LOGO LUVBIRDS 13
LOGO MRSUAVE1 14
LOGO UPLUSME1 15
LOGO TRIBAL1 16
LOGO MEYOU 17
LOGO CUPIDS 18
LOGO TOOSEXY 19
LOGO HARTBER 20

1 Mr. Suave
Parokya Ni Edgar
TONE MRSUAVE

2 Spaghetti Song
Sexbomb
TONE SPAG

3 Happy
Rolling Stones
TONE HAPPY

4 Maybe
Enrique Iglesias
TONE MAYBE

5 Where Is The Love
Black Eyed Peas
TONE WERISLUV

6 Perfect
True Faith
TONE PERFECT

7 I'll Be
Edwin McCain
TONE IBE

8 Kanlungan
Noel Cabangon
TONE KANLUNGAN

9 Forever's Not Enough
Sarah Geronimo
TONE 4EVERSNOT

10 Unwell
Matchbox 20
TONE UNWELL

11 Awit Ng Kabataan
Rivermaya
TONE KABATAAN

12 From The Inside
Linkin Park
TONE FROMTHE

13 Hey Whatever
Westlife
TONE HEYWHAT

14 Behind Blue Eyes
Limp Bizkit
TONE BEHINDB

15 Sweet Dreams
Eurythmics
TONE SWEETD

16 Broken Vow
Lara Fabian
TONE BROKEN

17 Mr. Suave Ver. 2
Parokya Ni Edgar
TONE MRSUAVE2

18 White Flag
Dido
TONE WHITEF

19 Gold
Spandau Ballet
TONE GOLD

20 Crazy Little Thing Called Love
Michael Buble
TONE CRAZYL

YULE B COOL

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Per DTI-NCR Permit [illegible] Series of 2003

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2 Send to 288
3 [illegible]

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To send a tone: TONE MRSUAVE 09181234567

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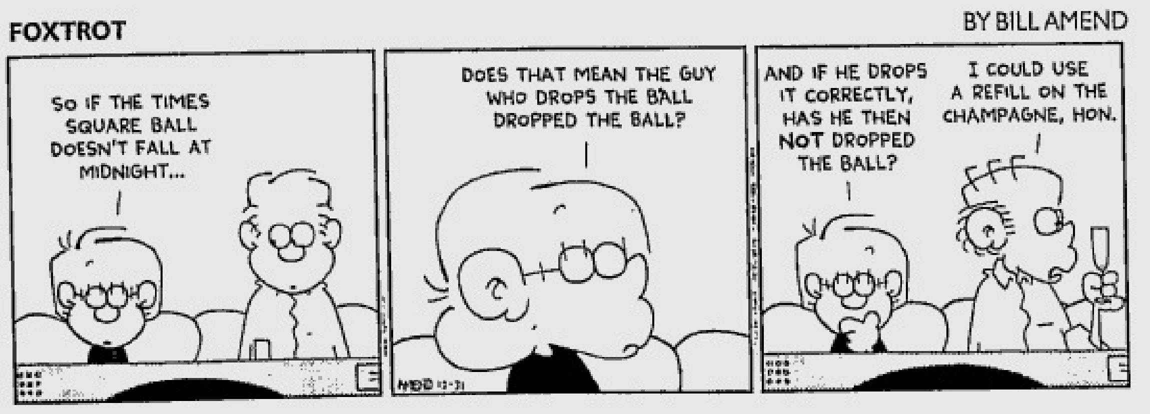
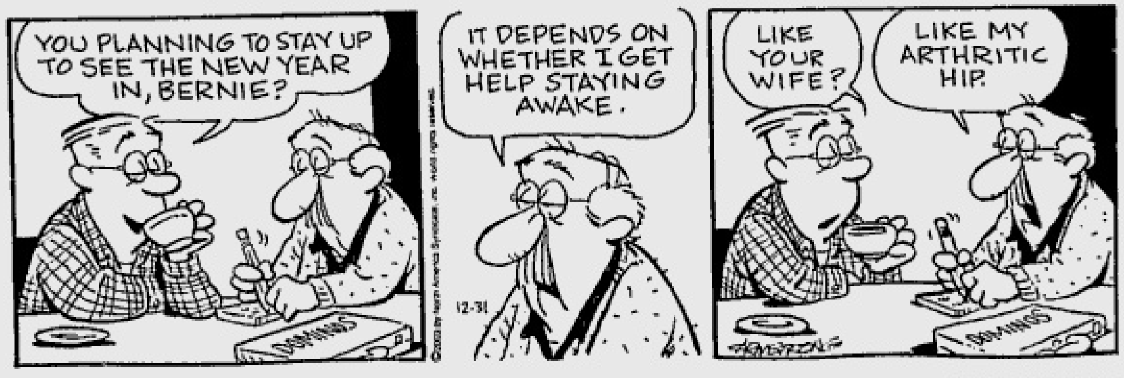
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


So IF THE TIMES SQUARE BALL DOESN'T FALL AT MIDNIGHT...
DOES THAT MEAN THE GUY WHO DROPS THE BALL DROPPED THE BALL?
AND IF HE DROPS IT CORRECTLY, HAS HE THEN NOT DROPPED THE BALL?
I COULD USE A REFILL ON THE CHAMPAGNE, HON.
AMEND 12-31

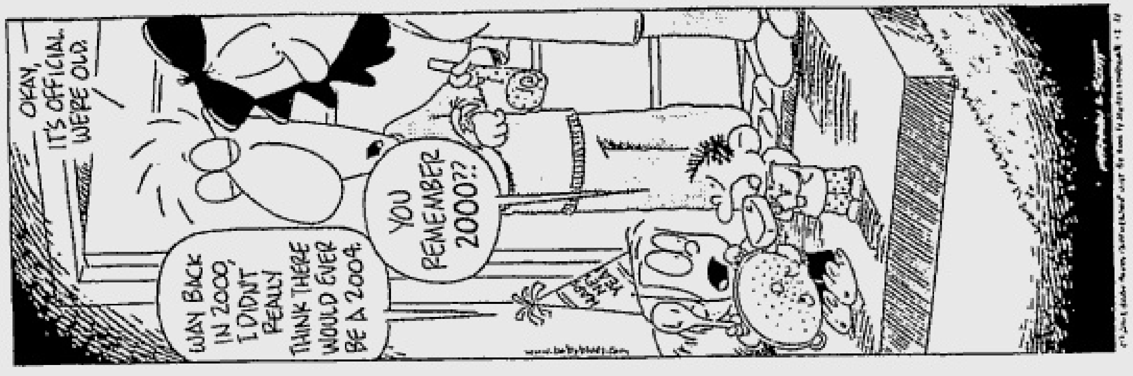
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


YOU PLANNING TO STAY UP TO SEE THE NEW YEAR IN, BERNIE?
IT DEPENDS ON WHETHER I GET HELP STAYING AWAKE.
LIKE YOUR WIFE?
LIKE MY ARTHRITIC HIP.
DOMINOS
12-31
ARMSTRONG

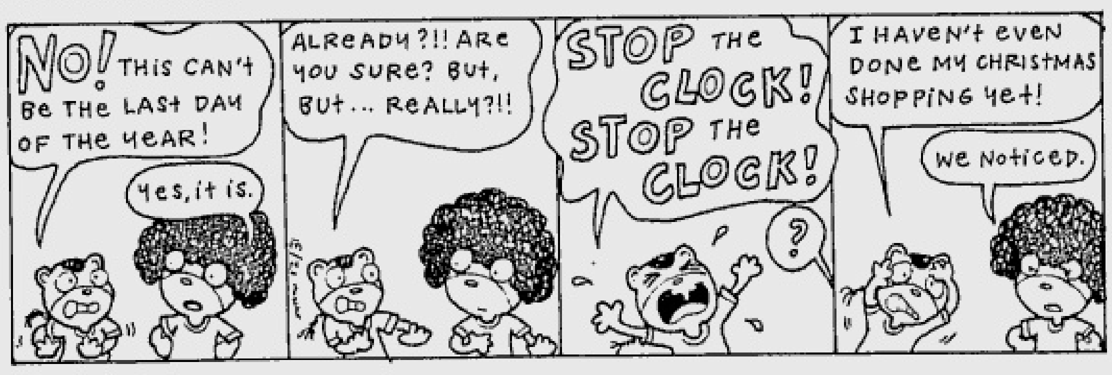
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


OKAY, IT'S OFFICIAL. WE'RE OLD.
YOU REMEMBER 2000??
WAY BACK IN 2000, I DIDN'T REALLY THINK THERE WOULD EVER BE A 2004.
www.babyblues.com

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


NO! THIS CAN't Be THE LAST DAY OF THE YEAR!
yes, it is.
ALREADY?!! ARE you SURE? But, But... REALLY?!!
STOP THE CLOCK! STOP THE CLOCK!
?
I HAVEN't even DONE MY CHRISTMAS SHOPPING yet!
we Noticed.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You work steadily and with serious dedication for whatever you want. You do not shirk responsibilities. You are attracted to beauty and harmony in your surroundings. Similarly, you dress well and present an attractive image to others. You appreciate the kindness of others. Work very hard this year. Your payoff arrives in 2005.
Birthdate of: Henri Matisse, artist; Anthony Hopkins, actor; Val Kilmer, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Avoid confrontation with bosses and parents today. People are not readily cooperative now. In fact, authority figures will easily oppose you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might have to rethink plans related to travel, education and foreign countries. It doesn't mean things are canceled, but they are definitely delayed for the moment.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Someone blocks your money-making ideas today. This could be because someone is threatened by what you might achieve. Do not be discouraged .

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Communication with friends and partners is not easy today. Try to find a balance between what you want and what someone else demands. Remember: You have rights, too.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You will have to make compromises at work today, but this is nothing new. Work always requires compromises and adherence to duty. (That's why you get paid.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You might feel a bit lonely or cut off from others today. Pay this little heed. Many people feel this way today. It's a passing thing and will be gone by tomorrow.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your energy is low today, and you do not have the drive or self-confidence to defend your own best interests. Therefore, play your cards close to your chest. Be cool.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): There's a saying: "Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but gets you nowhere." Keep this in mind today if you find yourself starting to fret over something.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might feel there is a gulf between you and others today. Actually, this is your own frame of mind. Don't let it overwhelm you. This feeling will be gone by tomorrow.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a poor day for serious discussions with someone. It's not easy to establish a sympathetic give-and-take in conversation. Postpone what you can.

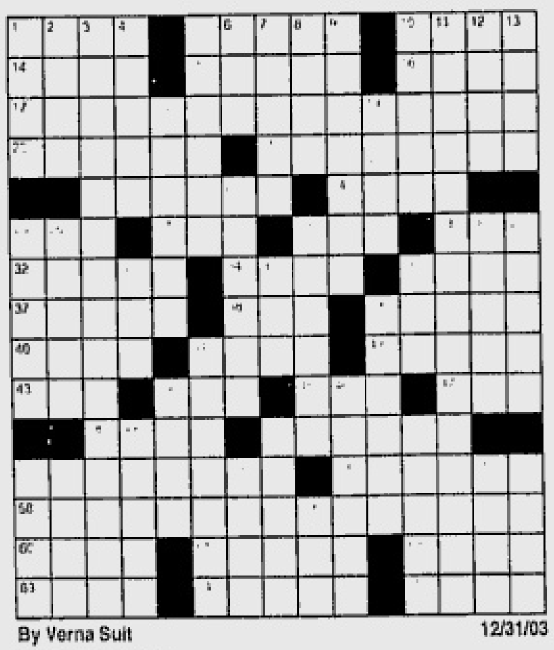
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Don't look to others for approval today. People feel generally pessimistic and critical. This doesn't necessarily have anything to do with reality.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): An older friend might give you advice today. If the advice is discouraging, you don't have to follow it. On the other hand, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Be open to suggestions.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Wine county in California
5 Darts
10 Double
14 Economist Greenspan
15 Hindu sage
16 Maui town
17 Two words
20 Art stands
21 Western Hemisphere
22 Empty spaces
24 Pound to a pulp
25 __ Darya River
27 Neither's partner?
28 Aries image
29 Bub
32 "Carmen" composer
34 Stove chamber
36 Speed-of-sound number
37 Woodworking tools
38 Ida. neighbor
39 Scoundrel
40 Appropriate
41 Stiff bristle
42 U.A.E. rulers
43 Linguistic suffix
44 "Ben __"
45 Fr. woman's title
47 Cool dude
48 Norse giant
50 Emetic medicine
52 Toured the Serengeti
55 "...__ no place like home"
58 Two words
60 Co-star of "Pretty Woman"
61 "That's __"
62 Bone. pref.
63 Very in Vichy
64 Dillon and Damon
65 Hey, you!

DOWN
1 Identify
2 Inter __ (among other things)
3 Four words
4 Photographer Adams
5 California city
6 Abner's size
7 __ Filipinas
8 Oates novel
9 Second fiddle in a jazz group?
10 Massenet opera
11 Three words
12 Early Peruvian
13 Slangy negatives
18 Factories
19 Study at the last minute
23 Danish change
25 Ease off
26 Phrygian king of lore
28 Make over
30 Luxury Honda
31 Storage box
33 Wide shoe width
35 Fido's doc
36 May honoree
39 Repeat again and again
41 Dutch Guiana, now
44 Add to staff
46 French lengths
49 Creates
50 Ninny
51 Ancient fabulist
52 Certain NCO
53 Copycat
54 Actress Thompson
56 Small salamanders
57 Editor's instruction
59 Part of a TV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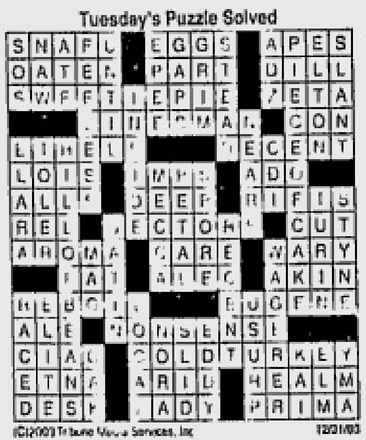
By Verna Suit
Silver Spring, MD

12/31/03

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved


SNAFU EGGS APES
OATEN PART DILL
ZETA
CON
DECENT
LOIS
ADO
ALL DEEP
RIFTS
REL
CUT
AROMA CARE WARY
AKIN
ALE NONSENSE
CIAO COLD TURKEY
ETNA ARID HEALM
DESK LADY PRIMA

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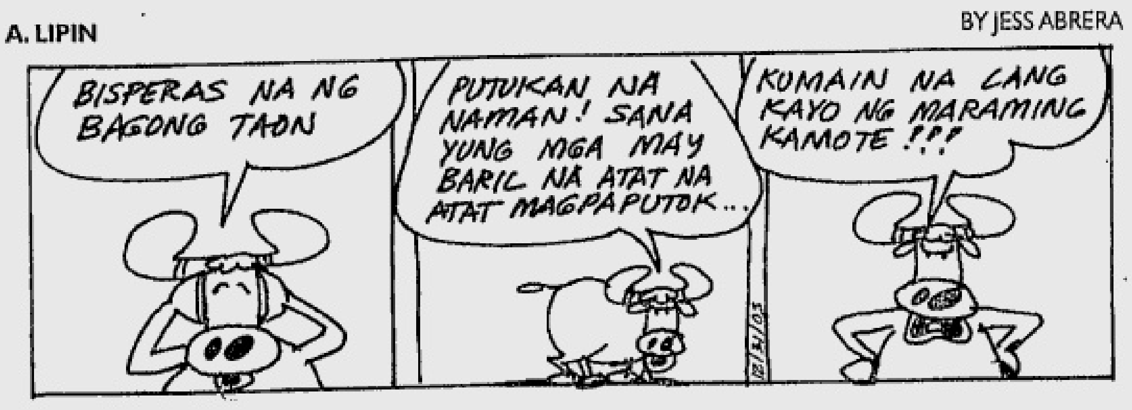
12/31/03

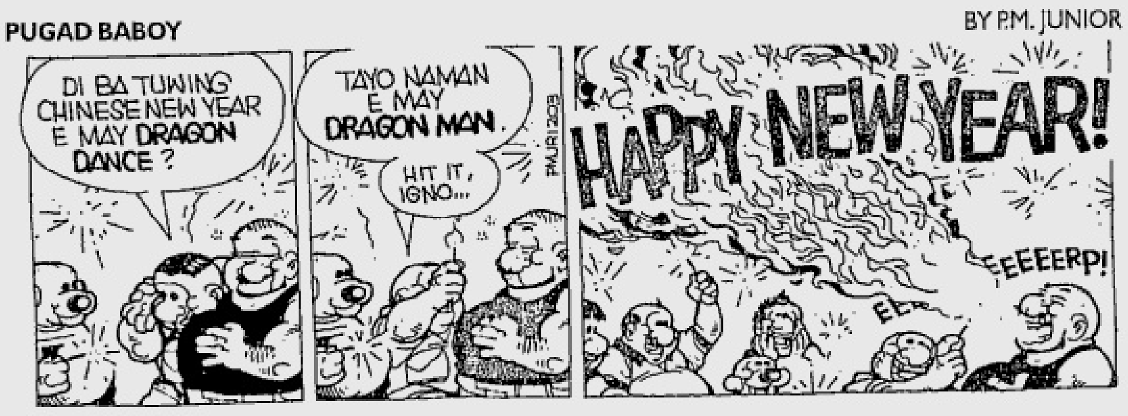
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


BISPERAS NA NG BAGONG TAON
PUTUKAN NA NAMAN! SANA YUNG MGA MAY BARIL NA ATAT NA ATAT MAGPAPUTOK...
KUMAIN NA LANG KAYO NG MARAMING KAMOTE !!!
12/31/03

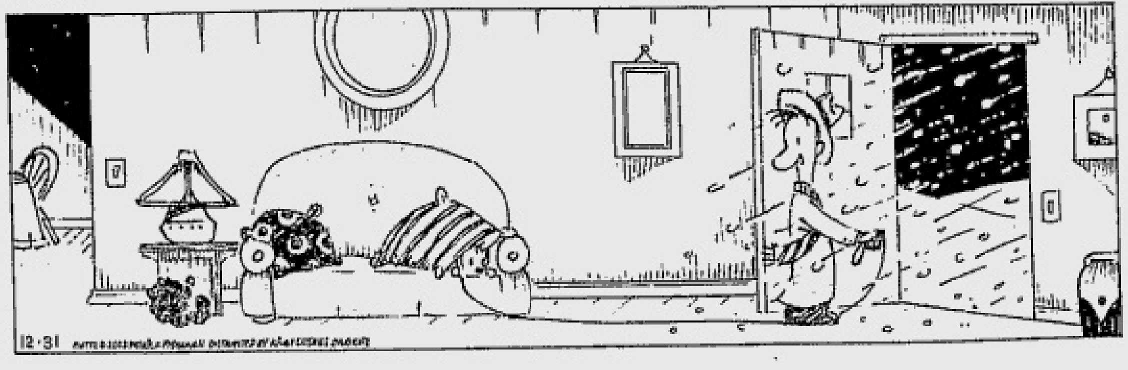
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


DI BA TUWING CHINESE NEW YEAR E MAY DRAGON DANCE ?
TAYO NAMAN E MAY DRAGON MAN.
HIT IT, IGNO...
PMJR1203
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
EEEEERP!

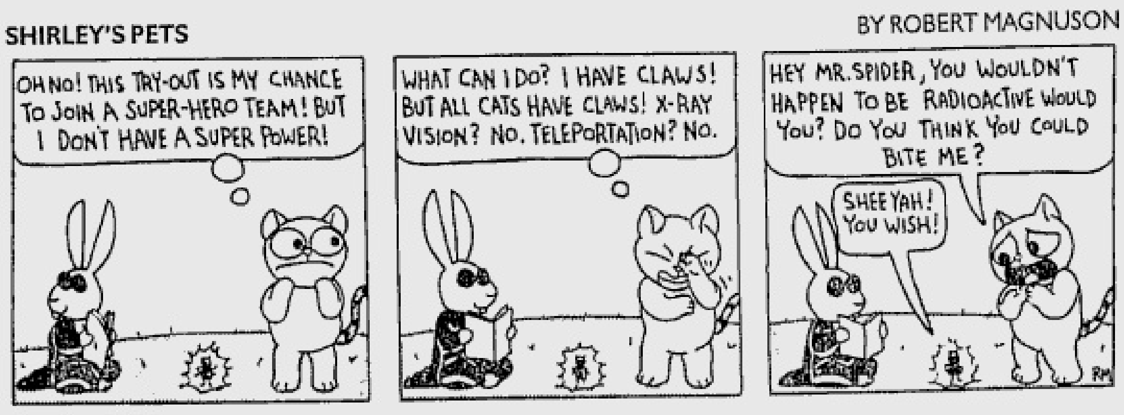
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL



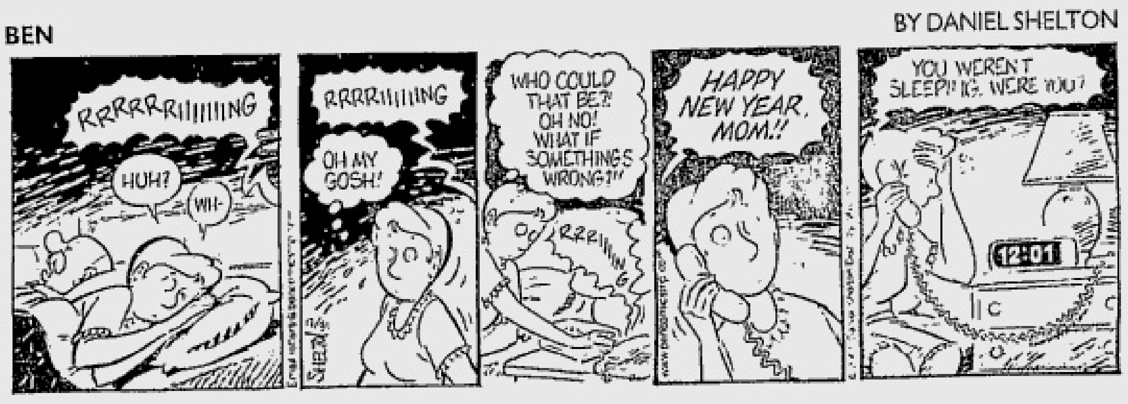
SHIRLEY'S PETS

BY ROBERT MAGNUSON


OH NO! THIS TRY-OUT IS MY CHANCE TO JOIN A SUPER-HERO TEAM! BUT I DON'T HAVE A SUPER POWER!
WHAT CAN I DO? I HAVE CLAWS! BUT ALL CATS HAVE CLAWS! X-RAY VISION? NO. TELEPORTATION? NO.
HEY MR. SPIDER, YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO BE RADIOACTIVE WOULD YOU? DO YOU THINK YOU COULD BITE ME?
SHEEYAH! YOU WISH!
RM

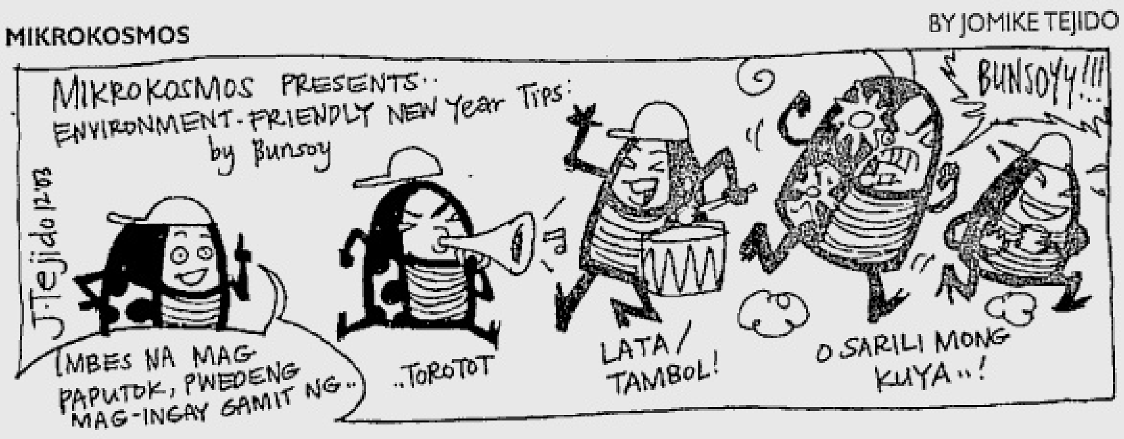
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


RRRRRRIIIIIING
HUH?
WH-
RRRRIIIIING
OH MY GOSH!
WHO COULD THAT BE?! OH NO! WHAT IF SOMETHING'S WRONG?!!
HAPPY NEW YEAR, MOM!!
YOU WEREN'T SLEEPING, WERE YOU?
12:01

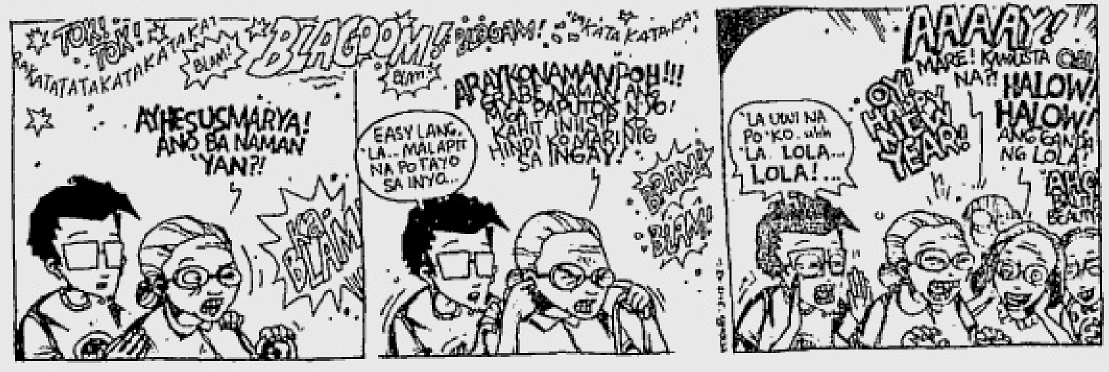
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MIKROKOSMOS PRESENTS.. ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY NEW Year Tips: by Bunsoy
J.Tejido 12.03
IMBES NA MAG PAPUTOK, PWEDENG MAG-INGAY GAMIT NG..
..TOROTOT
LATA/ TAMBOL!
O SARILI MONG KUYA..!
BUNSOYY!!!

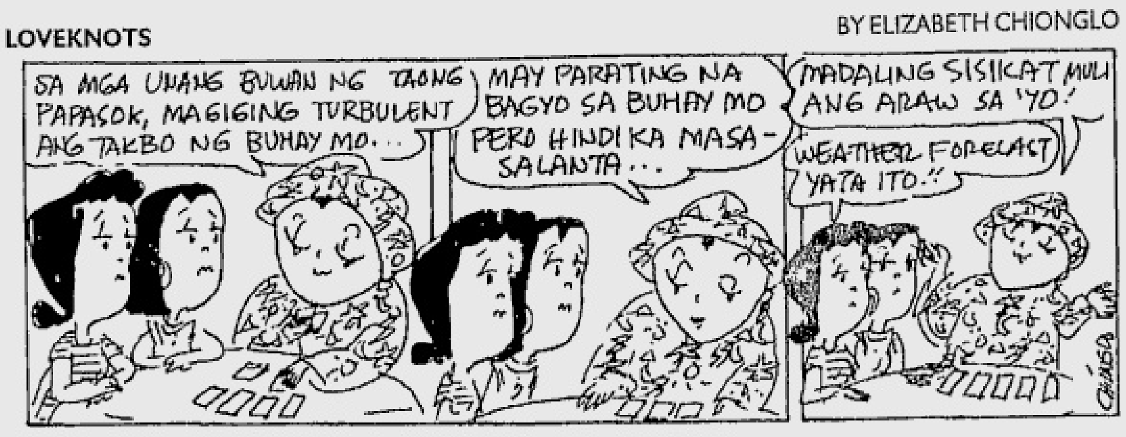
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


TOK! TOK!
RATATATATAKATAKATAKA!
BLAM!
BLAGOOM!
AYHESUSMARYA! ANO BA NAMAN 'YAN?!
KA-BLAM!
EASY LANG.. LA.. MALAPIT NA PO TAYO SA INYO..
ARAYKONAMANPOH!!! GRABE NAMAN ANG MGA PAPUTOK N'YO! KAHIT INISIP KO HINDI KO MARINIG SA INGAY!
BRAM!
BLAM!
LA UWI NA PO KO.. uhh LA.. LOLA... LOLA!...
OY! HAPPY NEW YEAR!
AAAAY! MARE! KAMUSTA NA?!
HALOW! HALOW! ANG GANDA NG LOLA!

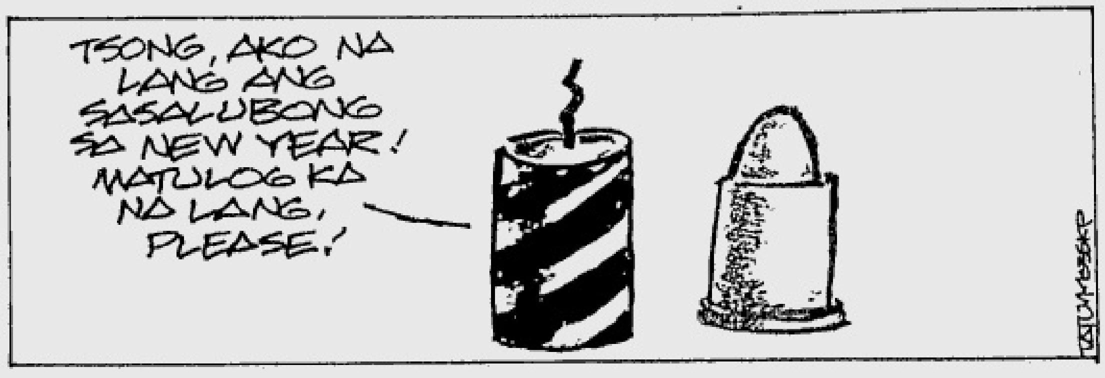
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SA MGA UNANG BUWAN NG TAONG PAPASOK, MAGIGING TURBULENT ANG TAKBO NG BUHAY MO...
MAY PARATING NA BAGYO SA BUHAY MO PERO HINDI KA MASASALANTA...
MADALING SISIKAT MULI ANG ARAW SA 'YO!
WEATHER FORECAST YATA ITO!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


TSONG, AKO NA LANG ANG SASALUBONG SA NEW YEAR! MATULOG KA NA LANG, PLEASE!

Gasps and wows in sports

By Christian B. Bautista
2bU! Correspondent

Kobe is accused of rape, Beckham defects to Madrid, Pacquiao floors Barrera and Pinoy bowlers bowl the world over

IT was a year of triumph and scandal in the sporting world.

To some extent, the year was humdrum, especially since the Kobe Bryant sex scandal grabbed the headlines away from actual competition. But nevertheless, sports still produced heroic performances worthy of the annals.

From San Antonio's great send-off for "The Admiral" (David Robinson) to the unlikely Super bowl between the Oakland Raiders and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, prolific performances kept fans from being disappointed.

On the local front, things definitely picked up at the end of the year. Manny Pacquiao entered the pantheon of boxing greats by beating a legend. The Philippine contingent won 48 gold medals to improve the country's record at the South East Asian Games. CJ Suarez won the World Cup and Dorothy Delasin got her third LPGA title. All of these victories came in the last quarter of the year.

A lot of stories defined 2003. Here are some of them:

Innocent or guilty?

National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star Kobe Bryant got into a lot of trouble during the off-season.

After his team got an early ticket out of the play-offs courtesy of Tim Duncan and the San Antonio Spurs, Bryant got into a sex scandal that virtually erased his boy-next-door image.

Last June 30, a 19-year old girl from Colorado filed a rape charge against the 25-year old. Bryant, who is married, denied the charge, but said the encounter was consensual.

The scandal not only hurt Bryant's reputation. The Lakers guard also lost lucrative endorsement deals.

Free on a $25,000 bail, Bryant could face life in prison if convicted.

Despite tension at the Lakers' training camp due to the media spotlight on the scandal, Bryant didn't slowed down on the basketball court. Contrary to expert opinions early in the season, the LA Lakers did not implode.

Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal displayed great chemistry with free agents Karl Malone and Gary Payton notching the league's best record recently with a 20-5 tally. Payton and Malone, both perennial All-Stars, are seeking their first NBA title.

Things may be looking up for the former slam dunk champion. Last Dec. 19, after a grueling day in court, Bryant came in late for Los Angeles' match-up against the fast-rising Denver Nuggets. Bryant shook off the distraction as he drilled a buzzer-beating jumper for a 101-99 victory.

Pac Man strikes

Probably the biggest story on the local front this year is Manny Pacquiao's stunning upset victory against Mexican Marco Antonio Barrera last Nov. 16 at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas.

Considered the world's best featherweight, Barrera never saw what hit him, as he was decked twice by a flurry of combinations flawlessly dished out by the former bakery worker from General Santos City.

Despite falling behind early after a questionable knockdown, Pacquiao bounced back by surprising everyone with outstanding hand speed and power punches throughout the match.

Pacquiao, the IBF superbantamweight champ, won the non-title fight in the 11th round after Barrera's corner threw in the towel.

Pacquiao's win was a monumental upset on all counts. The 29-year-old Barrera was still at his peak, hardly showing any signs of diminished reflexes in his fights leading up to his duel with the man nicknamed "Pac-Man." Barrera was definitely the odds-on favorite, enjoying a 4-1 spread at the hometown venue. With the surprising victory, Pacquiao climbed the pound-for-pound rankings, putting him alongside Filipino boxing greats Gabriel "Flash" Elorde and Pancho Villa.

Back home, the 24-year-oldPacquiao received a hero's welcome. He was given a condominium by the City of Manila and P1 million cash reward by President Macapagal (he had received $350,000 for the fight).

Pacquiao is set to fight WBA and IBF featherweight champion Juan Manuel "Dinamita" Marquez of Mexico in March.

Move to Madrid

David Beckham's transfer from one powerhouse to another hogged the headlines for a good part of the year. The captain of the English national team left Manchester United when he signed a deal with Real Madrid for 25 million pounds ($43,000,000).

Beckham, who is married to a member of the defunct Spice Girls, had spent 13 years with Manchester. With his transfer to the nine-time European champion, Beckham became part of a team already stocked with big names such as Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane and Luis Figo.

Bowling superpower

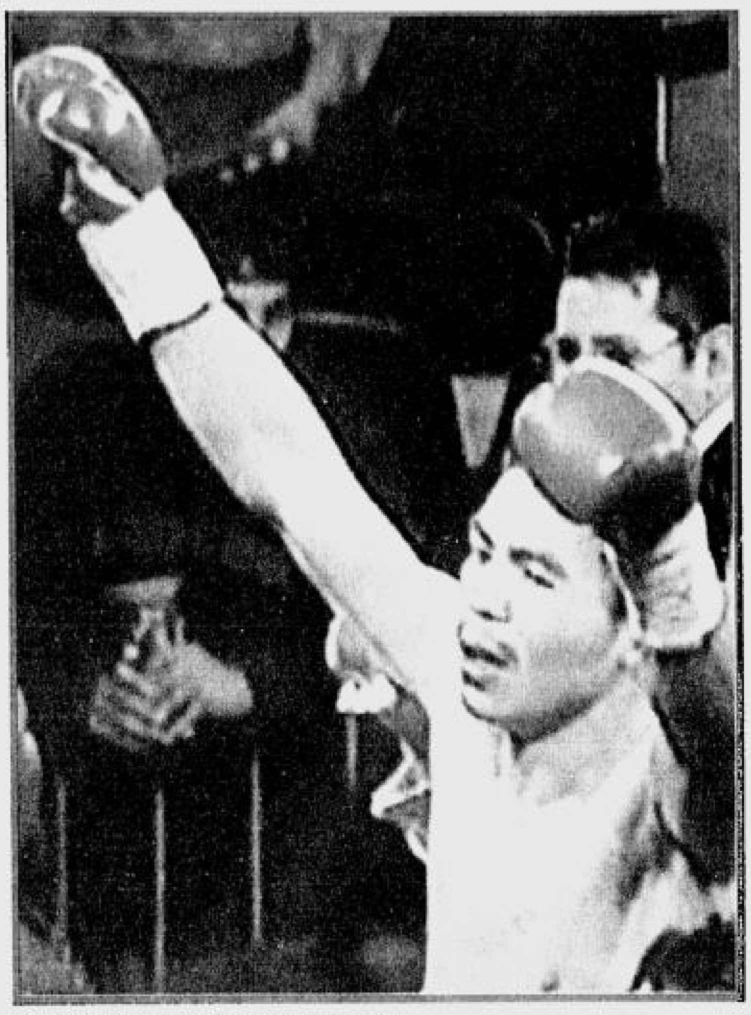
Without fanfare, Filipinos have emerged as a force in the international bowling scene.

The deluge of bowling victories started last September with the record-breaking performance of Cecilia Yap, Liza del Rosario and Liza Clutario at the women's trio of the World Tenpin Bowling Championships in Malaysia.

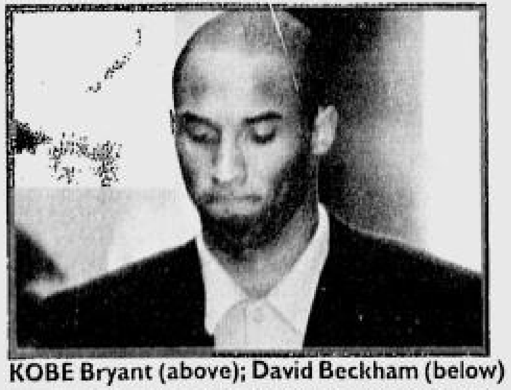
Adding to the victory was the victory by Clutario in the women's masters division.

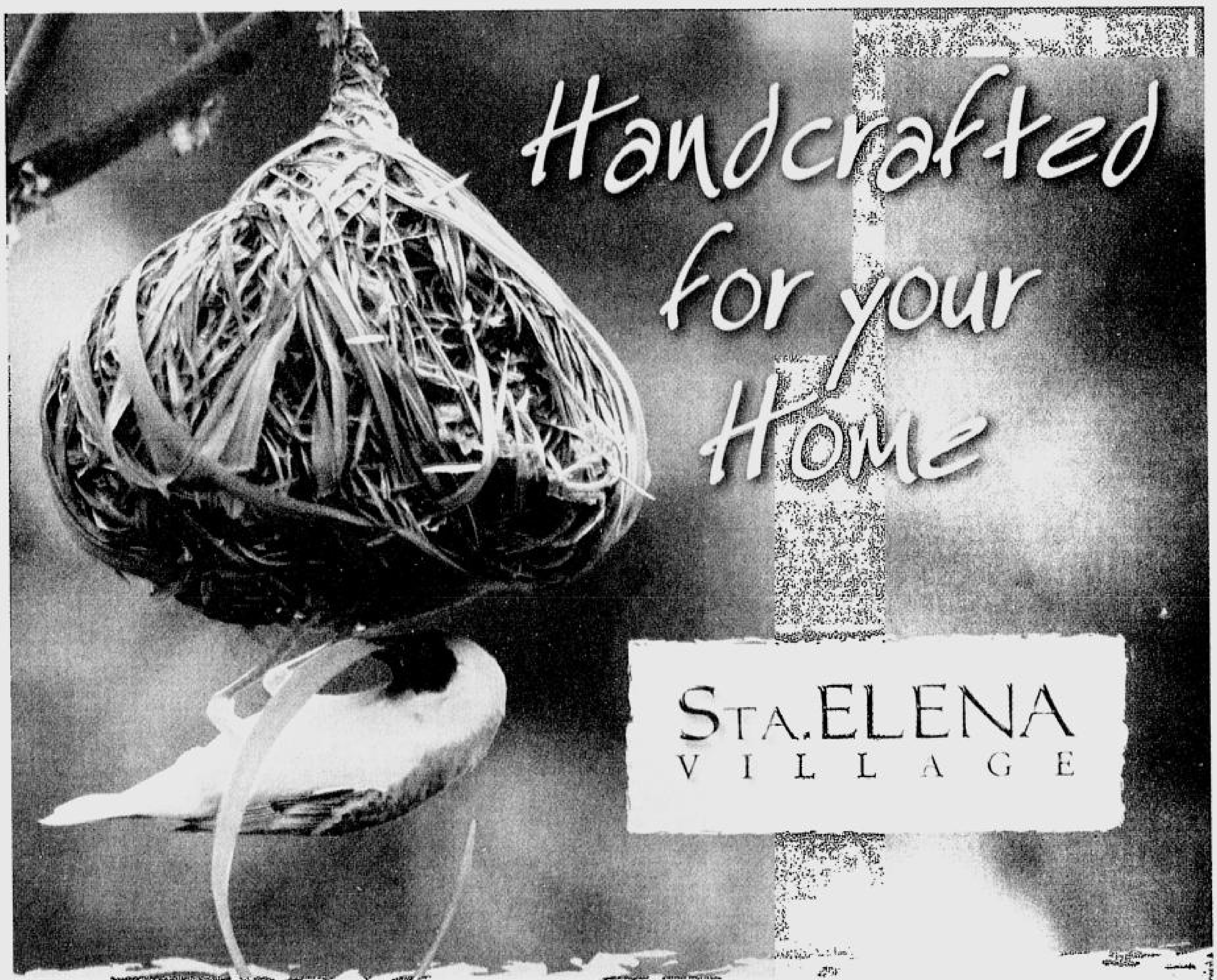
The wins boosted Steve Hontiveros' bid to become the president of the International Bowling Federation (FIQ). Hontiveros became only the third Filipino to head a sporting body after Lito Puyat (amateur basketball) and Florencio Campomanes (chess).

But the biggest win of the year came from CJ Suarez, who followed after Paeng Nepomuceno to become only the second Filipino to win the World Cup in Hungary. Compatriot Jojo Canare placed fourth, giving the Philippines top honors in the competition.


MANNY Pacquiao: a true Pinoy hero

CJ Suarez and his winning form


KOBE Bryant (above); David Beckham (below)



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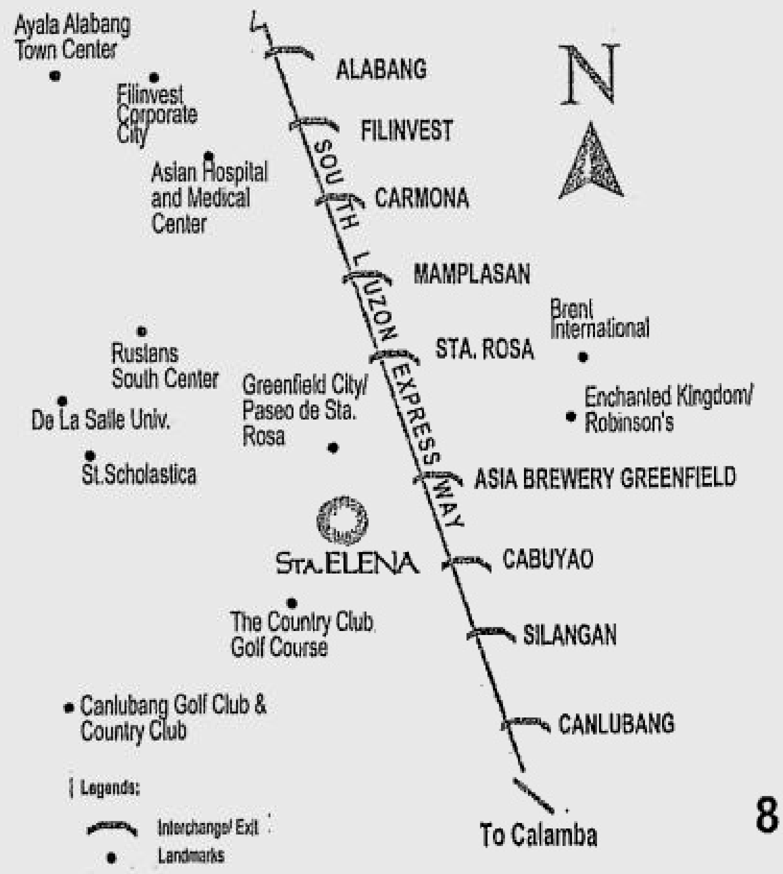

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How to bloom in the New Year

Vanity fare
Lora Gabol

FORGET the New Year's resolutions. The best way to start the new year is to party! What can beat a night of relentless merry-making before '04 kicks in?

Start the coming year with great vibes: great food, great music, great company.

Having the best year starts with the best you, of course. If previous years required drastic measures, let 2004 be different by working with what you have and simply putting a spin—not a 180- degree turn—on your looks. Turn pre-party rituals into habits, and bloom like a rosebud. Have a beautiful New Year!

Hot hair

If you want to change your 'do, just play around with texture and color.

Go with your gut feel. If you have doubts, don't.

Get subtle golden or caramel highlights to frame your face. Ask for a side-swept fringe or even baby-doll bangs for impact.

Make like the gorgeous F4 guys (talk about hot!) and sport Jerry Yan-inspired layers. Visit David's Salon and ask about the new His and Hers D4 Collection inspired by the F4.

For problem hair, have a treatment to make your tresses more manageable before styling.

Get a relaxing treatment for curls that are more frizzy than sexy if smoothening sera don't work. But make sure you're not damaging your hair.

Have a reputable salon condition and assess your hair and use only quality hair products. L'Oreal Extenso relaxes without the harsh stick-straight look. It's also cheaper than most straightening treatments.

The L'Oreal Inner Logic Reconstructive Hair Treatment will boost your hair's defense against chemicals.

Hot party hair isn't flat and perfectly coiffed so go for a slightly disheveled look.

Styling crèmes help smoothen frizzy hair, while stick waxes get you that funky, chunky look. The Bench Fix Styling Line gives a salon finish that's easy on the pocket.

Hot skin

Use more than just a light moisturizer for your face and body to cope the nippy holiday air.

Prepare for the skin-baring party outfits with regular exfoliation (you can do this twice a week). Have a grainy scrub for your body and a heavy-duty scrub-mask for your face.

Add a delicious-smelling body scrub like The Body Shop's Africa Spa Salt Scrub, a spa treatment in a jar.

Brighten sallow facial complexion with L'Oreal White Perfect Deep Whitening Mask. It won't bleach your skin but will slough off dry, dark patches and moisturize as well.

Use those self-tanners in cold December and January to acquire a golden tinge and disguise the pallor. Give some color to your pre-make up face and, most of all, hide the evidence of the noche buena that went straight to your thighs (darker skin means thinner appearance)!

CLARINS Instant Self-Tanning Spray

CLARINS
Spray Auto-Bronzant Express
Self Tanning Instant Spray

Apply a spray-on product like Clarins Instant Self-Tanning Spray to your body and a gel product like Phytomer Instant Tanning Gel to your face (dilute with a bit of moisturizer for more even color).

Before heading out in that sexy halter, moisturize, moisturize, moisturize! Lend a sexy sheen to shoulders and back with Nivea Body and Soul Skin Oil.

If you want a richer formula, try Jergens Soft Shimmer Skin Radiance Moisturizer with fab shimmer flecks.

Hot color

The hottest palettes this season are dramatic berries and natural cocoa-browns, which will work with just about any skin tone. Reds and browns pack enough color without going overboard.

When working with berry colors (red, deep/light pink), highlight only one feature. Play down eyes and cheeks when wearing red lips. To "electrify" the cheeks, keep your eyes and kisser neutral.

For those who want to wear berry colors on eyes: If you're very fair, keep it subtle. Pinks and red-tones make the eyes look swollen.

Browns and chocolate colors, on the other hand, can be used more liberally all over the face. Contour eyes with beiges and dusky browns. Create the illusion of supermodel cheekbones with bronze-pinks, and enhance your pout with nude-browns. Remember, though, that these techniques require make-up know-how.

If you're a newbie, practice or ask someone to help with your party face.

Fashionistas are toting Shu Uemura's Rouge Dessert Limited Edition Palettes in Strawberry Soufflé and Chocolate Macaron that come with coordinating eye and cheek colors. The collection also features six wonderful shades of the best-selling Rouge 4 Lip color.

For party color on your tips and toes, turn to Hollywood fave cult brand Essie. Paint on Ballet Slippers for quiet elegance.

For deep drama in those sky-high party stilettos, Bordeaux is your best bet.

Essie at Essenses Rustan's; Shu Uemura, Clarins, Phytomer at Rustan's; L'Oreal, Jergens, Nivea, Bench at PCX; Extenso and Inner Logic at L'Oreal Salons. For David's Salon, call 897-HAIR (4247).

E-mail the author at pdi_vanityfare@hotmail.com

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SOUTH LUZON 2 Dionisia M. Salvacion
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9 na nagwagi ng P50,000 worth of NESTLÉ Products: GMA Teresita Alviar
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9 na nagwagi P25,000 worth of NESTLÉ Products: GMA Perlita F. Maglaque NORTH
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Elidia B Erasga SOUTH LUZON 2 Francisco B. Parica EAST VISAYAS Maria Leonora R.
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MINDANAO Ceferina Pulgarinas
P'wede ka pa ring
magwagi!
Ihabol na ang entries para sa
Jan. 22 Grand Draw!
Per DOH-BFAD Permit No. 0920 s.2003

The acoustic. . .

From page E1

got its own venue for techno lovers. Madonna and **Missy Elliott** signed up with clothing company GAP and did a TV ad. Cebu's **Urban Dub** came to Manila and knocked the socks off many artists in the metro.

July

Sean Paul pleaded guilty after using profanity at a gig in Jamaica. Legendary soul singer **Barry White** passed away July 4 at the age of 58. **Ashanti's** second album, "II," topped the charts. Britney announced she's doing a Nascar movie. **Duncan Sheik** made a pit stop in Manila for two shows, fueling the acoustic craze.

August

The **2003 MTV Pilipinas** dragged on for a yawn-inducing three hours or more, but newcomer **Kamikazee** bagged Video of the Year. **Dashboard Confessional** released "A Brand, A Mark, A Mission, A Scar," and hit 'em emo-haters with the line "if you hate it because it's popular, then that's not my problem." Britney, Madonna, and **Christina Aguilera** displayed some girlie action at the MTV Video Music Awards.

September

The **itchyworms!** released their new single, "Buwan," along with a video. **F4** (or at least Ken and **Vanness**) came over for an overpriced, so-not-worth-your-10,000-peso-per-ticket concert. **J.Lo** and **Ben Affleck** called off the wedding (yawn). **Johnny Cash** passes away.

October

Rivermaya celebrated its 10th anniversary with a new album, "Between the Stars and the Waves," while **Cambio** launched its "Excerpt" E.P. **<s>andwich** went indie on its third release, "Thanks to the Moon's Gravitational Pull," **Squid 9's** new offering, "Kraken Modular" was also released independently, and featured **Vin Dancel** (of **Twisted Halo**), **Kaz Castillo, Buddy Zabala, Myrene Academia** and **Kathy Meneses** (of **Daydream Cycle**). **Jerry Yan** signs a whopping 13-million peso-contract with clothing company Bench.

November/December

And yet another excuse to party without paying taxes: MTV Philippines held an **MTV AIDS Summit** at the Fort (but really, in between all the sexual innuendos and jokes, did the message get across?).

Mandy Moore visited us for a week and witnessed Penshoppe's big autograph signing boo-boo at Megamall. The **NU Rock Awards** saw bouncers yet again beating up moshers. **Michael Jackson** got arrested for child molestation (shock, horror!), while really, really rich kids got to watch two more F4 concerts—ABS-CBN's 50th Anniversary party had Jerry Yan and Vic at their gig, and Dec. 26 saw kids lining up outside the Ultra as early as 8 a.m. for F4's show.

IMAGE EVALUATION
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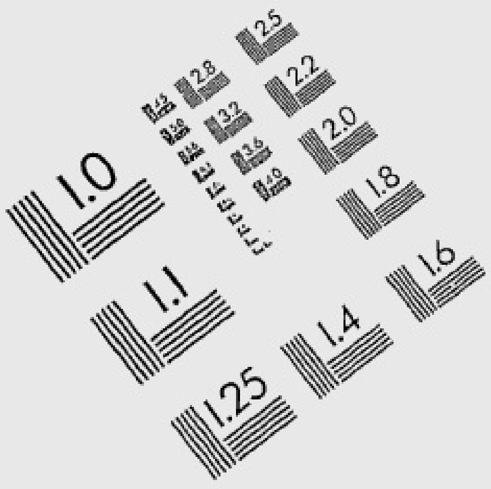
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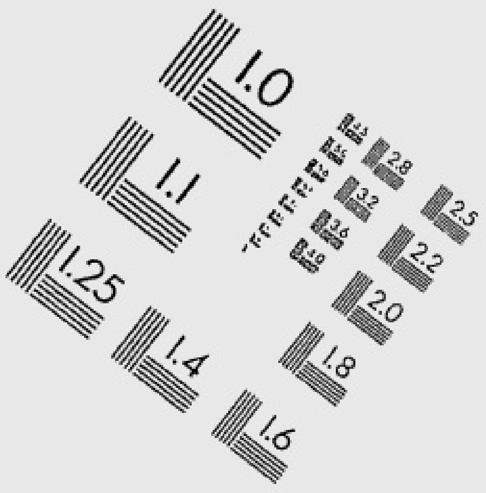
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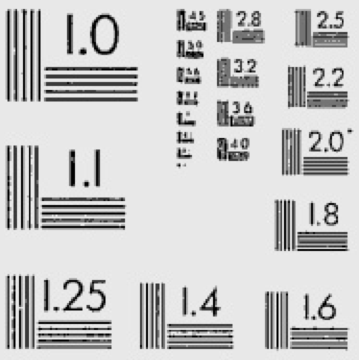
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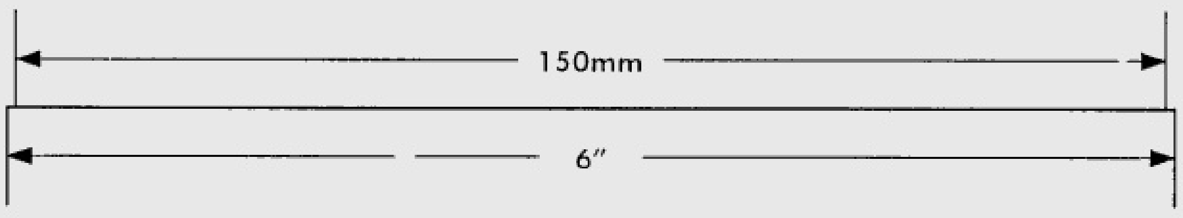

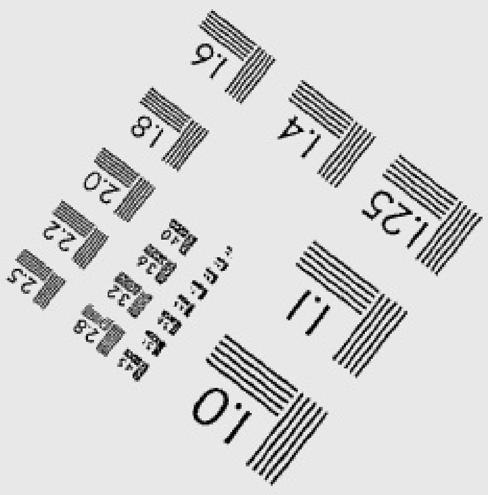
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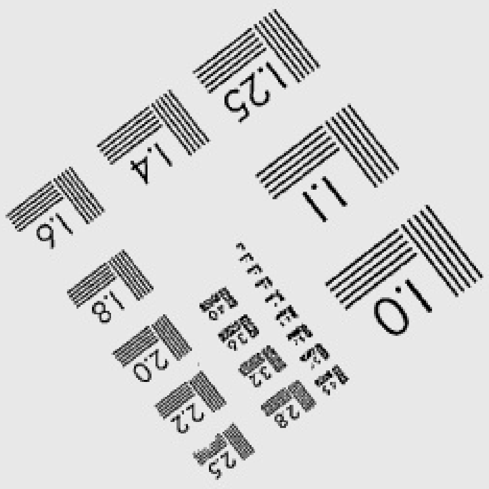
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